

108-PAGE F1 2023 PREVIEW SPECIAL

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2 MARCH 2023

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Advantage Red Bull as F1 gets serious for 2023

Three days in Bahrain and we now know a little more about what Formula 1 *could* look like in 2023. Some of what we learned from testing was fairly predictable – Red Bull looked impressive and Ferrari appears in the ballpark – but some of it was more surprising, such as the pace and confidence from Fernando Alonso and Aston Martin.

In this week's preview special, our F1 team delves into the details from testing (page 20) before running through some of the big themes to look out for as the paddock prepares to get the real 2023 action under way in Bahrain this weekend. We hear from Lewis Hamilton (p34), key figures at Alpine (p38) and the three (full-time) rookies of the year (p42). There's also our traditional team-by-team guide (p47).

It's not just F1 that kicks off this weekend. Both the F2 and F3 championships will be in Bahrain as well. Megan White talks to the two British stars at Prema, Ollie Bearman (F2) and Zak O'Sullivan (F3), as well as highlighting their likely title rivals in our preview (p60).

The competitive IndyCar Series also gets going in St Petersburg. David Malsher-Lopez picks out the main storylines on p68.

- You'll have noticed that, thanks to the extra pages in this week's bumper F1 preview, we have had to increase the cover price for this issue. Fear not, we will return to our normal price next week, with all the extensive coverage of F1 and global motorsport.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
9 MARCH**

Bahrain GP action
Our in-depth report from
the opening round of
the F1 season



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PIT + PADDOCK



F1 teams plan to ramp up deterrents

FORMULA 1

Incumbent Formula 1 teams know that they're onto a good thing courtesy of the championship's popularity and commercial growth, and don't want anything to jeopardise their income. That's why they're pushing to triple the \$200million anti-dilution fund to deter an 11th team from entering. But the most serious contender to join the grid, Michael Andretti, might have an alternative way in, with Red Bull supposedly weighing up a sale of AlphaTauri.

A team boss told Autosport that an inflated \$600m joining fee – altered in response to Audi's deal to buy into Sauber – is actually a best-case scenario. The 10 squads are lobbying for it to climb even higher. This is to protect their allocation of

prize money. Under the current Concorde Agreement, signed in August 2020 and covering the 2021-25 campaigns, the original \$200m sum ensures that each of the existing teams receives a \$20m cheque.

This number was agreed at the height of the COVID pandemic, when the delayed and shortened F1 season was taking place without paying spectators and teams faced severe financial pressure. Over the past three years, the situation has improved significantly. The cost cap is in place, while an ongoing adoration for *Drive to Survive* has increased income to leave teams able to turn away potential buyers. Subsequently, an 11th entry is seen as a destabilising force.

That's why Andretti effectively relaunched his bid with the announcement of a partnership with General Motors marque

Cadillac, to reassure the paddock that an all-American entry would be for the overall betterment of the series. Nevertheless, existing competitors would prefer to stick to 20 cars while dismissing the manufacturer support as a badging exercise.

Andretti has made it clear that he has deep enough pockets to pay the original \$200m and has targeted an ambitious 2025 arrival, meaning the ex-McLaren F1 driver would join just before a new Concorde Agreement lands in 2026. The revised paperwork will almost certainly up the entry fee. The interest of GM and the Andretti backers would likely cool massively if the figure does indeed triple, but they could hit back with a legal challenge.

In a perfect world, Andretti would lean into its nationality more than American-branded Haas by basing the whole operation Stateside. But if the current crop continues to prove obstinate, Andretti could buy an existing team, a route previously considered when he held failed talks with Sauber.

The future of AlphaTauri came into focus on the final day of testing in Bahrain last week after German publication *Auto Motor und Sport* reported that the team could be up for sale. Following the death of owner Red Bull's co-founder Dietrich Mateschitz last year, the new management is said to be closely scrutinising the marketing success of its junior team. Following the renaming for 2020, there's doubt as to whether the new AlphaTauri identity has been effective



Conflicting stories abound on future of AlphaTauri

SUTTON

Drugovich poised for debut as injuries rule out Stroll

FORMULA 1

Aston Martin understudy Felipe Drugovich is poised to make his Formula 1 race debut this weekend in the Bahrain Grand Prix as a replacement for the injured Lance Stroll. But recalling four-time champion Sebastian Vettel for future rounds is not entirely out of the question.

Stroll sustained injuries to his hand and wrist last week in a “minor accident” while cycling in Spain to build up fitness for the 2023 season. The team has otherwise remained coy, saying that its driver’s condition will be assessed daily. But paddock chatter suggests that the Canadian is more hurt than is being let on, with many speculating that he requires pins and is seeing the specialist who treated six-time MotoGP champion Marc Marquez.

Although Aston had stopped short of confirming his absence as we went to press, Stroll is extremely unlikely to make the Bahrain season-opener after also skipping testing. In that scenario, the Silverstone squad has announced that official reserve driver and reigning Formula 2 champion Drugovich will replace him in the promising AMR23. The Brazilian, who also boasts the 2018 Euroformula Open crown, subbed for Stroll in testing. His case has been helped by fellow reserve Stoffel Vandoorne having been tied up with racing in the inaugural Formula E Cape Town E-Prix last weekend.

If Stroll’s injury is as bad as suggested to force an extended spell on the sidelines, Aston hasn’t ruled out



recalling the services of its retired F1 champion Vettel for the Saudi Arabian GP across the 17-19 March weekend. When team principal Mike Krack was asked if he had spoken to the German in recent days about creating a ‘superteam’ with long-time rival Fernando Alonso, he said: “I have had a couple of phone calls with Sebastian. But this has been also last year, and this will continue in the future. I will not tell you [if Vettel has shown an interest in returning]. First of all, our plan is to have Lance in the car. And then we continue to see because we have Bahrain first before we speak about Jeddah. We have not made the final decision.

“Don’t forget one thing. He had a very, very thorough plan in mind for his retirement. This is also something that you have to respect. So, let’s see what’s happening.” Krack confirmed that neither Stroll nor Vettel had experienced the new car in the simulator.

ADAM COOPER & MATT KEW



to entry

in selling the fashion brand’s clobber.

Speaking to Sky Germany, Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko declined to comment specifically on the matter, but he was clear that Red Bull could not be satisfied with having one of its teams performing so badly in F1. “Such a decision is entirely up to the shareholders,” he said. “These are rumours that we do not comment on in detail... If you have a team that wins the world championship and the other one is only around ninth place, the synergies don’t seem to work properly. The overall result is not satisfactory. As proper business people, our shareholders will make the right decision.”

Given F1’s current success, the irony for Andretti is that an AlphaTauri takeover would still cost him close to that contested \$600m. And that’s before a possible bidding war with Honda, which is reconsidering its F1 exit. Then, should Andretti choose to live out his American dream, he’d need to keep spending to relocate the entire set-up.

Even then, some say that Red Bull remains committed and is ready to expand AlphaTauri’s Faenza factory. Others suggest that the team could fully move to the current aerodynamics facility in Bicester. That said, the shared industrial estate is already chokka. Going down that path would potentially leave the fizzy drinks company to either buy out a lot of local businesses or move down the road completely.

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TOP FIVE



ANDRE

BAHRAIN F1 DEBUTANTS

Oscar Piastri and Logan Sargeant will this weekend become the latest drivers to make their first Formula 1 starts in Bahrain. But which of their predecessors made the best impression?

JAMES NEWBOLD

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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SCOTT SPEED

5 The American's inclusion in this list for a trouble-free drive to 13th in 2006 owes much to the problems that have afflicted many a promising F1 rookie in Bahrain down the years, making his selection one by a process of elimination. Racing with a downgraded Cosworth V10 in the back of his Toro Rosso against a field of V8-powered machines, Speed made Q2 in 16th and beat both Toyotas in an uneventful race.



COOPER

ZHOU GUANYU

4 The only F1 rookie of 2022 went some way to silencing critics that he owed his place on the grid to his nationality by scoring a point on his debut. The Chinese driver had his best time deleted in Q2 so started 15th, then had to fight back after his Alfa Romeo engaged anti-stall on the opening lap. After an important pass on Mick Schumacher, Zhou moved up to 10th when both Red Bulls retired late with fuel system woes.



GOODEN/DPPI

YUKI TSUNODA

3 Ross Brawn said after Tsunoda's showing on his way to ninth in 2021 that the AlphaTauri man was the "best rookie F1 has had for years". A final-lap pass on Lance Stroll's Aston Martin after a move the Japanese described as "emotional" on Alpine returnee Fernando Alonso went some way to making up for a disappointing Q2 elimination on medium tyres, Tsunoda having stunned with the second-fastest Q1 time on softs.



SUTTON

STOFFEL VANDORNE

2 Something of an outlier in this ranking, Vandoorne wasn't a full-season regular when he made his bow for McLaren in 2016. The GP2 champion was called up late when Fernando Alonso was ruled out with rib injuries from his Australian GP crash and duly outpaced team-mate Jenson Button to qualify 12th. He lost ground at the start when Valtteri Bottas instigated drama at Turn 1, but raced well to the final point in 10th.



TEE

NICO ROSBERG

1 His 2005 GP2 double win signalled that Rosberg had an affinity with the Sakhir track, the scene of his superb F1 debut for Williams the following year. It didn't start well – a scruffy Q2 meant he started mid-pack in 12th, then tripping over Nick Heidfeld at Turn 1 cost him his front wing and 45s. But Rosberg set fastest lap on his charge to seventh, one spot behind team-mate Mark Webber, and was just 44s shy of the podium.



COATES



Sixteen Hypercars lined up for Le Mans 24 Hours

LE MANS 24 HOURS

The honour of winning this year's centenary edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours will be fought out by a field of 16 cars in the Hypercar category. That's the most entries in the top category at the French enduro since 17 LMP1s did battle back in 2011 (above).

Sixteen cars in Hypercar for the double-points round of the World Endurance Championship on 10-11 June represents a three-car increase on the 13 full-season entries for the first season in which LMDh prototypes will race against Le Mans Hypercar machinery. Publication of the Le Mans entry list on Monday confirmed the planned additional entries from Cadillac and Glickenhaus, while the factory Porsche Porsche team will also field an extra car.

Proton Competition has opted to delay its WEC entry with a Porsche 963 LMDh, which will not be delivered until late April, until after Le Mans, while there is no second LMH from the ByKolles-run Vanwall Racing squad.

Porsche Penske Motorsport has opted to bring over one of its 963s from the IMSA SportsCar ranks because "it's all about maximising our chances" on the 75th anniversary of the Stuttgart marque, said Porsche Motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach.

"The history of the race has shown that the additional cars deployed are often the factor that ultimately tips the scales," added Laudenbach, who pointed to the 2015 victory with Porsche's third 919 Hybrid. Felipe Nasr is the only driver listed against the car so far, but will be joined by other

members of the PPM IMSA squad.

Cadillac is taking both of its IMSA entries to Le Mans as expected: Chip Ganassi Racing will field a second V-Series.R, the new name for what was previously known as the V-LMDh, alongside its full-season WEC entry, and Action Express Racing will make its Le Mans debut with its car.

IndyCar star Scott Dixon will again join full-season drivers Sebastien Bourdais and Renger van der Zande in the Ganassi car, while Action Express's endurance driver for the season, Jack Aitken, will line up alongside regulars Pipo Derani and Alexander Sims.

Glickenhaus has again received an additional Le Mans entry to race alongside its full-season WEC car. Franck Mailleux, who raced the Pipo-engined 007 LMH in 2021 and 2022, is the only driver nominated for the additional car so far.

A total of 24 LMP2s, all ORECA 07s, have received entries, eight in the pro/am sub-class. Five automatic entries gained in IMSA and the European and Asian Le Mans Series are among those added to the 11 WEC cars.

There are 21 cars entered in GTE Am, now the only GT class after the demise of GTE Pro. The additions to the 14 cars from the WEC include Walkenhorst Racing, which will field a Ferrari 488 GTE Evo after claiming an auto invite by winning the GT class in February's Asian Le Mans Series.

The entry is completed by the Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 based on a Next Gen NASCAR Cup racer that will fill the Garage 56 grid slot for a so-called 'innovative car'.

GARY WATKINS

Dumas to race electric van

PIKES PEAK

Celebrated French motorsport all-rounder Romain Dumas has won the Pikes Peak hillclimb four times, and holds the course record up the Colorado mountain from his 2018 exploits in the electric Volkswagen I.D. R sport-prototype contender. He will bid for fifth crown this summer. In a van.

Dumas has been lined up for the 25 June event in SuperVan 4, Ford's latest all-electric iteration of an ongoing series of outrageously modified machines dating back to the 1970s. The new weapon is the result of a collaboration between Ford Performance and electric motorsport specialist STARD, the Austrian firm best known for its work in rallycross.

The van is said to have a power output of 2000bhp, and reach 100km/h in less than two seconds – handy for your painting-and-decorating business. It sports four electric motors and an all-wheel-drive system powered by a 50kWh cell battery, along with carbon composite body features, and adjustable regenerative braking. Dumas drove it at last year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, but the upcoming hillclimb is much longer...

Ford motorsport boss Mark Rushbrook said: "Pikes Peak is the perfect next stop for Ford Performance, and is the perfect place to take SuperVan 4, as both have long, storied histories that ignite the imagination of racing fans. It's time to take our electric vehicle technology and put it to the test on the mountain against some of the most impressive performance vehicles in the world."

Dumas added: "With high altitudes cutting power in traditional ICE-powered vehicles, the electric powertrain of SuperVan 4 has no loss at elevation and will be a healthy competitor in this year's race."





WEC The British Jota team has unveiled the colour scheme in which its new Porsche 963 LMDh will race in the World Endurance Championship's Hypercar class this year. Together with the release of images of a show car liveried in what have been billed as the 'racing gold' colours of new sponsor Hertz, the reigning LMP2 champion team has announced a tie-up with legendary NFL quarterback Tom Brady's eponymous clothing brand. The car to be raced by Antonio Felix da Costa, Will Stevens and Yifei Ye is set for a debut at round three of the WEC at Spa at the end of April. **Photo by Hyundai Motorsport**

United squad completed by Brit teen Lubin

WEC

The final United Autosports seat for this year's World Endurance Championship alongside 2019-20 LMP2 title winners Filipe Albuquerque and Phil Hanson has been filled by 18-year-old Freddie Lubin. The Briton comes into the line-up in the #22 ORECA 07 as the Silver driver in place of Will Owen.

Lubin is making the switch to sportscar racing after a season in Euroformula Open in which he took fourth in the standings.

"One of my dreams has always been endurance racing, so I'm delighted to get the chance with a team like United," said Lubin.

"The next step in single-seaters would have been Formula 3, but that's silly money and would have to be a two-year project. It's not impossible that I could do some endurance stuff and then go back to single-seaters."

United team boss Richard Dean said that Lubin impressed during a one-day test aboard one of the team's ORECA's at the Algarve circuit in October.

"We had Phil there as a reference and Freddie performed really well," said Dean. "We ran him through a proper programme, including race and qualifying runs, and he took it all in and did a good job."

GARY WATKINS



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ADAC MOTORSPORT

DTM

One-time Formula 1 grand prix starter Jack Aitken will race in the DTM this year in a new Ferrari 296 GT3.

Aitken has spent the past two seasons racing Lamborghinis for Emil Frey Racing in ADAC GT Masters and GT World Challenge Europe. The Swiss team has jumped ship to Ferrari for 2023 and joins the DTM for the first time. Aitken, who is combining his programme with selected outings with the Action Express Cadillac team in the IMSA SportsCar Championship and at the Le Mans 24 Hours, will be paired with 20-year-old Dutchman Thierry Vermeulen.

"I have a pretty strong relationship with Emil Frey, I like the team and the people, we had quite a bit of success together so I was inclined to continue with them," said Aitken. "I was watching the Ferrari with interest even before I knew I would potentially be driving it."

Aitken said that both he and the team have been "pretty impressed with what they've seen in the way it's put together and how the car is built". "In their words, you can tell it's a proper racing car and I'm sure ORECA's involvement [it built the 296] is a big part of that as well," he added. "We're pretty excited to put it on a track."

EFR is the only team to run Ferraris in the 2023 DTM. The Prancing Horse will be joined by the same five manufacturer participants from last season – Audi, BMW, Lamborghini,

Mercedes and Porsche – but the line-up of teams and drivers is changing significantly.

Audi squad Team Rosberg is the most high-profile departure after securing three titles with Rene Rast between 2017-20, citing its inability to source sufficient financial backing to be competitive. Audi's effort will be led by a downscaled effort from Abt, which enters two R8 LMS GT3 evo IIs for Kelvin van der Linde – who is no longer part of Audi's factory stable – and Ricardo Feller. Engstler Motorsport has bought the car Abt ran for Rast last year, with factory driver and multiple TCR champion Luca Engstler expected to drive.

Manthey EMA is arguably the most significant new entry, with two Porsche 911 GT3-Rs for Thomas Preining and Dennis Olsen following the conclusion of its involvement in the World Endurance Championship running Porsche's GTE Pro factory team. Fellow Porsche newcomer Toksport WRT has entered two cars for Christian Engelhart and two-time DTM Trophy champion Tim Heinemann, while Timo Bernhard has

expanded his team to two cars, with Ayhan Guven joined by German Carrera Cup champion Laurin Heinrich.

Mercedes squad Landgraf, which carried Raffaele Marciello to the ADAC GT Masters title last year, is another notable new entrant, with Maro Engel moving across from GruppeM and joined by Jusuf Owega. But while HRT retains its 2022 drivers Luca Stolz and Arjun Maini, Winward has scaled back to two cars for Lucas Auer and David Schumacher, sidelining 2021 champion Maxi Gotz.

SSR Performance switches from Porsche to Lamborghini and has announced that factory drivers Mirko Bortolotti and Franck Perera will lead its line.

Walkenhorst Motorsport's departure was expected after BMW nominated Project 1 Motorsport as its second supported team in addition to reigning champion Schubert, while Mercedes teams Mücke Motorsport and GruppeM Racing join Audi customer Attempto in heading for pastures new.

JAMES NEWBOLD



TRENTZ/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



BTCC Double-take time: it's an NGTC car in Laser Tools Racing colours but it's not an Infiniti Q50. The company, along with Mark Blundell's MB Motorsport management emporium, last week showed off the newly liveried BMW 330e M Sport in which MB protege Jake Hill will fight for British Touring Car Championship honours this year with West Surrey Racing. As in 2022, Hill will race in a separate paint scheme to his team-mates.

Double-header rounds for XE

EXTREME E

Extreme E has revamped its event format ahead of its third season of competition this year, with every round holding a double-header and single-car qualifying ditched. That means 10 races across its five dates in 2023, following its first double-header round in Sardinia last season.

Single-car qualifying time trials are now replaced with two rounds of two five-car qualifying heats. The top five progress directly to the grand final, with the semi-final stage dropped, while the slowest five enter a redemption race. This replaces the 'crazy race', from which the winner would progress to the final to join the two fastest semi-finalists.

If two teams are tied for points after the qualifying heats, then the squad with the fastest time in the Continental Traction Challenge – a designated sector on the lap, with the male and female drivers' times added together – will progress to the final.

Extreme E founder and CEO Alejandro Agag said that the new format would



MCMMASTER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

“improve the level of racing out on course” and “only enhance our series”.

Chief championship officer James Taylor added: “For Season 3 we wanted to create something spectacular and we feel this new sporting format achieves that. At each round, there will be double the opportunity for points and podiums, meaning a lot more to play for at each race weekend, while drivers and teams will have to navigate that racing tightrope of risk and reward.”

The championship kicks off in Saudi Arabia on 11-12 March before visiting the UK for the first time since its 2021 season decider when it heads to Scotland on 13-14 May. It finishes in Chile in December.

JAMES NEWBOLD

TAYLOR-SMITH SWITCHES TO POWER MAXED

BTCC

Multiple British Touring Car Championship race winner Aron Taylor-Smith has jumped ship to join the Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra team for the 2023 season.

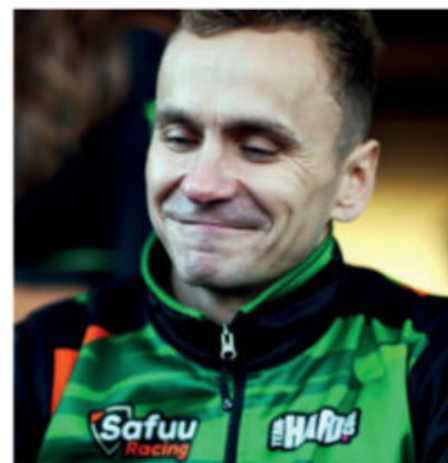
Taylor-Smith has spent the past two seasons since returning to the BTCC with the Team Hard Cupra Leon team, finishing 20th and 21st in 2021 and 2022 respectively. That's a poor return for a driver who has taken four race victories in the series and was eighth in his rookie season in 2012 with the Motorbase Ford line-up – still his best BTCC championship position.

The Dubliner now forms an all-Irish line-up at the Midlands squad alongside Northern Irish GT convert Andrew Watson.

“The dream after this is to win another race in the BTCC and the dream after that is to fight for a championship,” said Taylor-Smith, whose last victory came in 2016.

With PMR's line-up now full, the futures of its 2022 duo Ash Hand and Michael Crees are unclear. Hand impressed as a rookie last year, but sources suggest that he has been forced to sit out the 2023 season while working on a return in 2024.

MARCUS SIMMONS



JEP

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IN THE HEADLINES

BARCELONA DROPS CHICANE

Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya will not feature its much-despised final chicane for this year's Spanish Grand Prix, for the first time since 2006. It means the lap now finishes with two fast right-handers, in a bid to increase overtaking. Clearance was granted by F1 race director and safety delegate Niels Wittich, and FIA head of circuit and rally safety Stuart Robertson. The track is now homologated both with and without the chicane.

AUBRY IN VECTOR LINE-UP

World Endurance Championship LMP2 race winner Gabriel Aubry has joined the Vector Sport squad for the 2023 series. The Frenchman has been announced for the British team's ORECA-Gibson 07 LMP2 alongside Liechtensteiner Matthias Kaiser. Ryan Cullen, who was listed in the car on the original WEC entry list, is expected to race the car at the season opener at Sebring as well as play a key role in development of the Isotta Fraschini Le Mans Hypercar that Vector could race as early as this year.

AL HARTHY'S WEC ASTON

Omani driver Ahmad Al Harthy will race in the WEC for the first time with the TF Sport Aston Martin team. The two-time Blancpain GT Series Endurance Cup Pro-Am title winner is moving up from the European Le Mans Series with the British team to race a Vantage GTE with Charlie Eastwood and Michael Dinan.

CARROLL FOR WRT BMW

Ex-A1GP champion Adam Carroll will reunite with top sportscar team WRT for the first time since 2012 in this season's GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup. The Northern Irishman will race one of the Belgian squad's four BMW M4 GT3s in the Bronze Cup alongside fellow UK drivers Tim Whale and Lewis Proctor. Aussie Calan Williams has also joined WRT in a change of tack after a switch from Formula 2. He will be joined by Niklas Krutten in the Sprint and Endurance Cups, with Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer also in for the enduros.

HONDA JOINS THE FIELD

Honda will join the GTWCE Sprint Cup grid this year. Reigning Italian GT Sprint champions Jacopo Guidetti and Leo Moncini will pilot one of two NSX GT3s fielded by Nova Race, run by ex-racer Christian Pescatori.



Slim Borgudd 1946-2023

OBITUARY

The career of Swede Tommy 'Slim' Borgudd, who died last week from Alzheimer's disease, just lacked long-term backing to be more successful. Yet 125 wins from 379 races underlines 41 years of incredible graft.

The teenaged Borgudd watched Stirling Moss race at Karlskoga in 1959 and was hooked. Already a budding musician, he joined the merchant navy at 14, refocusing on cars in his early twenties. That he reached Formula 1 – in what was a bit more than a cameo role, for a world championship point for sixth place in the 1981 British GP was a mighty effort with ATS – was remarkable.

After 10 GP starts, F1 was over in 1982, for the money ran out after three races with Tyrrell, a dogged seventh in Brazil the highlight. But Borgudd never gave up, going on to win the 1994 Nordic Touring Car crown in a Mazda and four lucrative European truck racing titles.

Music opened doors for the drummer, who competed at home from 1968 with a Formula Junior Lotus 22 acquired from jazz legend Chris Barber in London, then Formula Ford-ised. The nickname 'Slim' stemmed from a New Orleans blues gig

where shipmates cajoled him into stepping up to join Willie Dixon and Memphis Slim, whose drummer had tweaked a wrist.

After winning in the ex-Ronnie Peterson/Jonas Qvarnstrom Focus sportscar, Borgudd switched to tin-tops in 1972 with Rolf Skoghag's ex-Ivor Goodwin Hillman Imp, then an elderly but rapid Volvo 122S. But 1973 Scandinavian Formula Ford Cup gold gave him a potential leg up to F3. He led late on his debut in a rented March at Kinnekulle in 1975 before he was taken out, but a point was made.

A master of stretching 'glider fuel' budgets, Borgudd's mechanical skills, tenacity and popularity with rival F3 teams – Roger Heavens lent workshop and parts to sustain his dreams – got him there eventually. He won the 1979 Swedish title and finished third in the European (behind Alain Prost and Michael Bleekemolen) in a year-old Ralt-Toyota RT1, but an F2 deal for 1980 fell through, so F3 it was again!

Among his contemporaries on the 1960s Swedish music scene were Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, later of ABBA, for which Borgudd played session drums. The group would brand his F1 graduation, not fund it. The tempestuous Gunther Schmid's ATS was lacking staff and budget, but Slim took Heavens as team manager, plus crewmen, and got the seat.

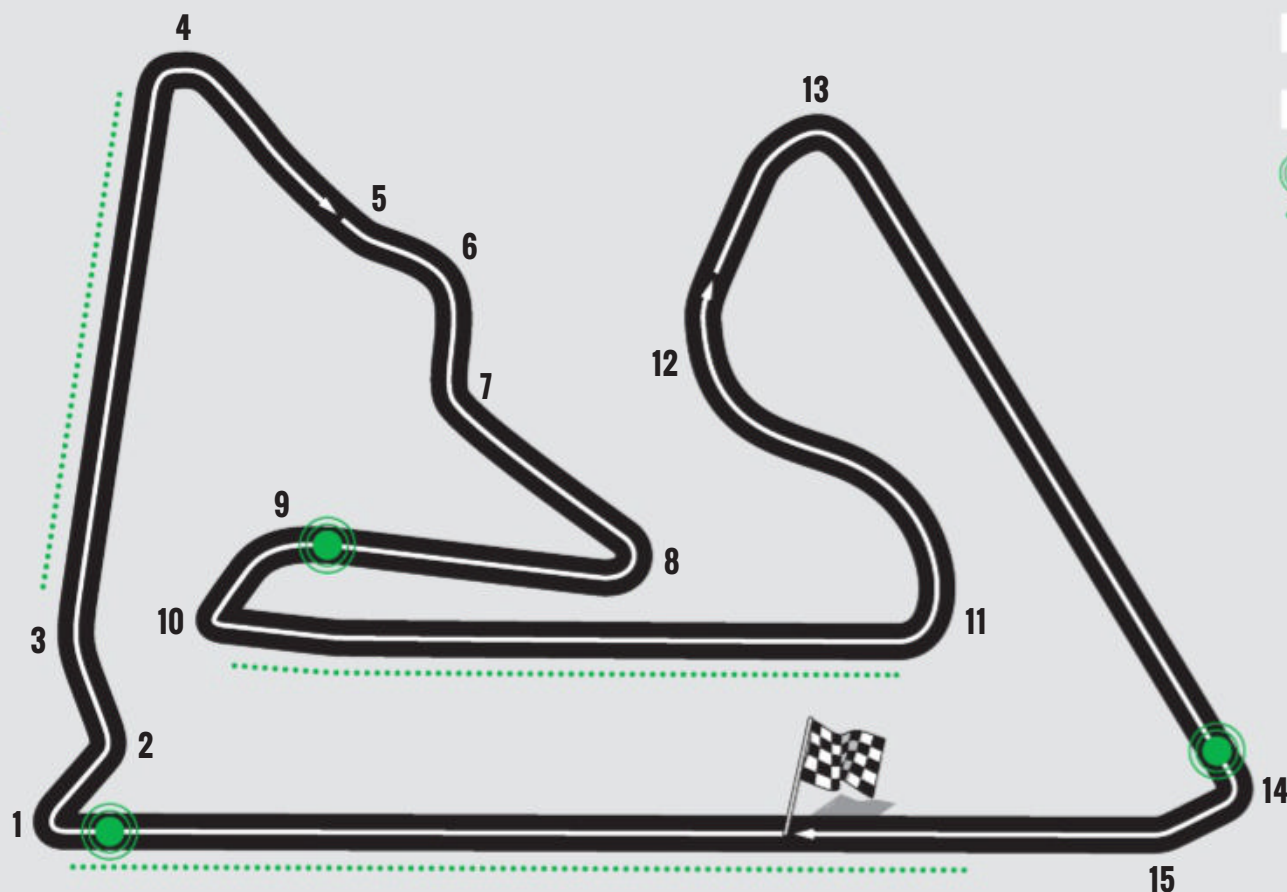
A journeyman in F3000 and at Le Mans, he won the 1989 Willhire 25 Hours at Snetterton with Mark Hales in a Ford Sierra Sapphire Cosworth, before finding his metier in trucks. Coventry-domiciled Borgudd subsequently developed Radical's US market and ran teams, then prepared Classic F3 cars. He will be remembered as a perennial hard tryer, fine musician and good bloke.

MARCUS PYE



ROUND 1/23

F1 BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



Sakhir

Length 3.363 miles

Number of laps 57

DRS detection
 DRS zone

UK START TIMES

Friday 3 March

FP1 1130 FP2 1500

Saturday 4 March

FP3 1130

QUALIFYING 1500

Sunday 5 March

RACE 1500

CATCH THE RACE LIVE

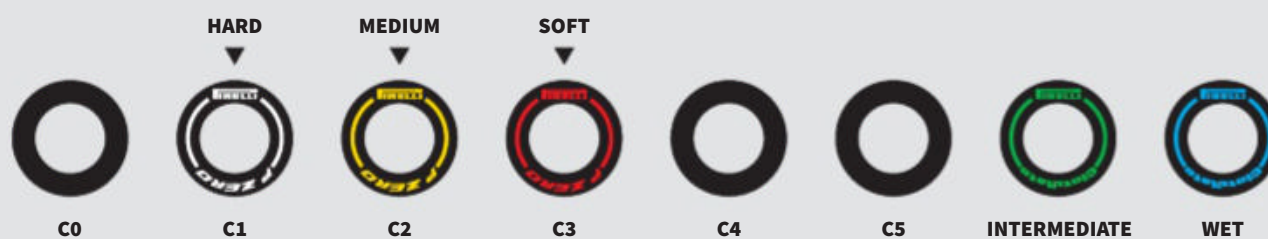
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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP – FINAL 2022 POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	454
2	Leclerc	308
3	Perez	305
4	Russell	275
5	Sainz	246

Constructors

1	Red Bull	759
2	Ferrari	554
3	Mercedes	515
4	Alpine	173
5	McLaren	159



SAKHIR STATS

Previous winners

2022	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari
2021	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2020	Sergio Perez	Racing Point
2020	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes

2022 POLE POSITION

Charles Leclerc
 1m30.558s

POLE LAP RECORD

Lewis Hamilton
 1m27.264s (2020)

RACE LAP RECORD

Pedro de la Rosa
 1m31.447s (2005)



Laps led

Sebastian Vettel	237
Lewis Hamilton	214
Felipe Massa	102
Fernando Alonso	96
Charles Leclerc	96
Michael Schumacher	77
Nico Rosberg	62
George Russell	59
Jenson Button	38
Max Verstappen	30



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Why we're changing our ratings

The off-season has given us the chance to rethink how we grade each Formula 1 driver's performances. For starters, it's now all about the race

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Just because I'm not on the podium or I don't have an outstanding drive in terms of overtaking, you don't ever rate it very highly..." McLaren driver Lando Norris there, taking Autosport to task for not rating him highly enough for his performances in the 2022 Formula 1 season. Specifically, he was referencing the 'Driver Ratings' rankings piece we produce after each grand prix weekend. Despite ending last year with an average score of 7.3/10 – the fifth highest of the grid – Norris still wasn't happy.

Well, we've given the topic a fair bit of thought and decided to make a change to how we rank the F1 field. But we're willing to bet that Norris and his peers will still take issue – and whether it's being called out in the paddock, a phone call from a public relations staffer or manager, or even reposting a positive ranking on their social media, we know they're reading. No matter how much they say they "don't pay attention" to outside assessment.

Today we're talking to you, the reader (F1 driver or team member or not, we value you all the same!) about what's going to be different for our rankings in 2023. But perhaps the most important change we've made is that from now our ratings will *only* concern the race action on each GP weekend. This will mean that, without a potent qualifying result boosting an otherwise unremarkable race, drivers will likely receive more lower and fewer higher scores. For example, under our old system, a Williams driver making Q3 and then

"Simplicity in a complex and very popular motorsport division is a key aim"

finishing outside the top 10 in the race was nailed on for an '8' or similar. Now, they're much more likely to come down a few marks simply for executing a 'par' race performance. Driver excellence is obviously rewarded, with big errors or just generally underwhelming driving punished accordingly in our new scores.

For the sake of clarity, we will still be awarding a '10' mark, it's just we expect these to be harder to achieve given the ranking definition now calls for a "remarkable" race performance. The 'maximum' mark we award isn't reserved for generational performances along the lines of Juan Manuel Fangio at the Nurburgring in 1957, but we expect a highly impressive drive – a season standout – to hit that rank. So, for 2022, Max Verstappen at Spa is an obvious '10'.

One of the biggest considerations we made when embarking upon this course was how such a change might impact the recording

of another on-track element of a driver's weekend beyond the race, which will naturally affect the story of their seasons. To compensate for this, although it won't currently be publicly available, we're creating a database to record particular incidents and driver/team explanations that previously would have fed into their weekend ranking. Come our season review articles at the end of the year, this information will enable us tell the complete story, as you'd expect of a publication with a near-73-year history.

We're making these changes for several reasons. While Autosport launched as a weekly magazine in 1950, the way our readers consume our stories has changed. Too often in recent years, readers from across our channels have been confusing our weekend rankings as 'race-only', so this should help clear that up. Simplicity in a complex and very popular motorsport division is also a key aim. Plus, we hope it'll reduce the tiresome accusations of 'bias' towards or against drivers of certain nationalities.

But we recognise issues remain. In my three years as Autosport's grand prix editor, I've come to realise that this is an imperfect exercise. For a start, although we have the same definitions to work from, new F1 writer Jake Boxall-Legge and I will naturally have differing views on exactly when a performance meets a certain mark when it comes to producing the ratings pieces across the upcoming season. The entire exercise is subjective, however hard we try to be objective.

But, much more importantly, rating an F1 driver in such a scoring system is to go against the championship's very nature, that racing a Williams in 2023 is very different to a Red Bull – and yet the same definitions apply. This is in essence what Norris was genially chaffing at to newly promoted Autosport F1 newshound Matt Kew (who gleefully threw me under the bus and said I was to blame for every lower rating he received in 2022!) in Abu Dhabi last year. In F1, sometimes the best performances are very hard to spot and so often go unrewarded in outside perception.

Under our new system, that issue remains. But as a counter, it should be acknowledged that F1 teams and drivers regularly lie (*or massage the truth? – ed*) to the media and fans when speaking about their cars' and own performances. That's absolutely fine – they want to maintain their specific competitive advantages and avoid giving anything away to rivals, and this has long been a part of motorsport. But it's a two-way street.

Ultimately, and certain online readers would do well to remember this, a task such as driver ratings is supposed to be enjoyed and respectfully challenged. It's done as properly and seriously as should be demanded of Autosport, reporting on the world's top motorsport championship and being read by its competitors. But it should have a fun element too. This is 'just motor racing', after all... 🏁

● *The revised scoring criteria will appear next week*



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IndyCar's motivation problem

The series' mishandling of its switch to a hybrid formula doesn't paint it in the best light. Just as well the on-track action looks set to be as exciting as ever

DAVID MALSER-LOPEZ

There are so many reasons to be enthusiastic about the 2023 IndyCar season, and we have outlined the potential storylines of excitement and intrigue in our preview this week. But there is another reason why IndyCar and its followers need this year to be thoroughly absorbing; it may help distract from the series fumbling and bumbling over the introduction of its next engine formula.

Let's recap. On the eve of last year's season-opener at St Petersburg, IndyCar revealed that the 2.4-litre-with-hybrid formula was being pushed back to 2024. Of course we understood that hybrid unit builder Mahle was struggling with global supply chain issues – heck, this had been foretold in many automotive-related industries in 2018–19, and was greatly exacerbated by COVID-related production issues. It seemed a little late in the day for an announcement – just 12 months before the new engines and their hybrid units had been due to make their race debut, but... OK.

On 28 March, just 25 days later, both Honda (in a Chip Ganassi Racing car driven by Scott Dixon) and Chevrolet (in a Team Penske machine shared by Will Power and Josef Newgarden) tested their 2.4-litre cars – minus their hybrid units – on a rarely used configuration of Indianapolis Motor Speedway's road course. Even without the hybrid's surfeit of electrical thrust, and with the engines still not optimised, these angry-sounding engines were pushing out over 100bhp more than the current 2.2s.

Then, through the summer, there were “no comment” – or “ask IndyCar about it” – type responses from HPD and Chevy folk when quizzed about the projected first test of their 2.4s with the hybrid component added. It turns out that behind the scenes there were increasingly urgent discussions regarding the fact that the Mahle design was perhaps not fit for purpose in an extreme application – ie racing – and so Chevy and Honda were getting very antsy.

Autosport has it on good authority that in light of this problem, Chevrolet wished to delay the introduction of hybrid units and press ahead with the 2.4-litre engines for 2024, given 1) their power advantage over the 2.2s, and 2) the fact that Chevrolet/Ilmor – and presumably Honda Performance Development – had spent millions of dollars and two years developing these bigger engines. But HPD, after consultation with Honda Japan, said no. For IndyCar to be relevant to their road cars, increasing the capacity of the internal combustion engines was far less of a priority than introducing hybrid units. Put the 2.4 ICE on ice and let's work with Chevrolet and an alternative outside supplier to develop a new spec hybrid unit.

On 6 December, IndyCar pushed out a press release talking about Shell's 100% renewable fuel being introduced in 2023 – highly impressive – and Firestone running guayule-derived rubber, a bio-circular material from the woody desert shrub, for all street course races. Again, very worthy. The third point on the release came across

as a “by the way”, but was understandably the main focus for most IndyCar correspondents. The series would be sticking with the proven 2.2-litre engines as it introduced hybrids for 2024, and development of the 2.4s had been “paused”.

One irate engineer told Autosport: “Of course the 2.4s had to be paused: the next 12 months are about making sure we both come up with an alternative hybrid unit that won't embarrass us at St Pete in

“All we'll be doing is inching forward with hybrids, 10 years after Formula 1”

March 2024. It's sooooo frustrating. I don't know why it took so long for alarm bells to ring at IndyCar that the hybrid unit we had before just wasn't going to work. I think if they'd admitted to that sooner, there's a chance we could have found a solution that didn't involve backtracking. With more lead time, we *may* – and I emphasise the ‘may’ because supply chain issues have been very real – have found an alternative hybrid supplier *and* been able to run the 2.4s next year.”

Said a senior spokesperson for the other manufacturer: “It's just sad that we as OEMs and the series as a whole have been forced to fix an issue, instead of generating a totally positive narrative for 2024 of, ‘Here are our new engines, here are the hybrid units’. Everyone would have forgiven us for delaying the new formula until 2024 if we'd still have done what we promised – more powerful engines and street car-relevant hybrid power. Instead, all we'll be doing is inching forward with hybrids, 10 years after Formula 1. I can only imagine how we're being perceived from the outside.”

When the green flag drops on Sunday at St Pete, and throughout the year at IndyCar's wonderfully diverse array of race tracks, the kerfuffle over the series' next power formula will be subsumed in the excitement generated by the on-track action. IndyCar has produced some of the best motorsport action of the past decade, and Penske's takeover in 2020 has generated far more hits than misses. There's a sense of direction, signs of thriving rather than merely surviving.

But I hope that IndyCar's perhaps mythical ‘third engine manufacturer’, while doing its due diligence, doesn't delve too deeply into how the series has handled its move into the next formula. Hope, too, that the folks in Detroit and Tokyo who have been writing the cheques for current OEM participation in IndyCar are of a forgiving nature when it next comes time to commit. 🍀

➔ P68 INDYCAR PREVIEW

After three days of action in the sole pre-season test, F1 2023 is ready to go. Here's our essential guide

F1 season preview

2023

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Red Bull RB19

Mercedes W14

McLaren MCL60



Aston Martin AMR23

TEE



Haas VF-23

SUTTON



Williams FW45

SUTTON



Alfa Romeo C43

SUTTON



Ferrari SF-23



AlphaTauri AT04

SBLOXHAM



Alpine A523

SUTTON



SUTTON

Testing analysis

Red Bull 'wins' the 2023 testing war

Despite big efforts from Ferrari and Mercedes, Max Verstappen and Red Bull enter the season as favourites after an impressive three days in Bahrain

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

He seized the moment. Valtteri Bottas thrust his Alfa Romeo down the inside of Sergio Perez's Red Bull at Bahrain's downhill, Turn 8 hairpin, just after the pair had gone three-wide with Lando Norris in his McLaren at the first corner. Bottas's bravery paid off. He was ahead, with the chequered flag almost in sight, and yet free to charge off after the leader: AlphaTauri's Yuki Tsunoda.

How Formula 1 would wish that the varied teams contesting this small spot of 'racing', which concluded the final day of 2023 pre-season testing, makes up the pecking order for the real campaign about to get under way at the same Sakhir circuit this Sunday. It would certainly hark back to the lofty aims of the returning ground-effects rules reset. But this was just a flash of orchestrated group running; the cars were actually testing F1's safety car restart procedures with the championship's timing and tracking systems. The likely true order

of car performance is seemingly startlingly close to how things ended in 2022, albeit with a couple of significant revisions in the midfield.

There's no getting away from it. After topping two of the three days (only Zhou Guanyu's late C5 soft-tyre effort for Alfa on day two stopped a clean sweep) and with the fastest overall time, plus solid reliability and long-run pace, Red Bull is comfortably favourite.

Perez's 1m30.305s led the way in the performance runs that closed out the final day, in conditions closest to the qualifying session for the upcoming Bahrain Grand Prix, albeit using C4 soft Pirellis that won't be used this weekend. That time was 1.4 seconds quicker than Max Verstappen's test-topping lap from 2022, and 0.25s up on Charles Leclerc's pole time for Ferrari 12 months ago.

Perez produced a series of one-lap efforts in the final two hours of the last day, after Red Bull had largely eschewed the softer rubber for most of the test. Indeed, Verstappen's first-day-leading and day-two second-placed times had been set on the C3 mediums on which Red Bull typically conducts its pre-season running. After Lewis Hamilton

Bottas attacks Perez in testing 'battle' that F1 would doubtless like to see come the season



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Perez topped the Sakhir running on the final day



SUTTON

had finally deposed long-time third-day pacesetter Leclerc with a C5 soft lap with just under 90 minutes of the final session remaining, Perez moved ahead 10 minutes later.

The Mexican's initial efforts on the C4s had required wrestling the Red Bull through the swooping uphill left and right of Turns 11-12 at the end of the track's second sector, but now the car was shimmying through – lightly (perhaps with some fuel taken out, that typical testing caveat is always worth recalling), deftly, very alive. That describes the RB19 at its best, and it was best seen in Verstappen's hands. The Dutchman said that everything Red Bull had refined from the RB18 were design decisions “put on the car that were clearly better”. He felt this test was “very positive days”, where he was “just enjoying driving the car”. The confident atmosphere in the Red Bull camp was hard to suppress, no matter how well its expectation-management talk kicked in.

There were a few down-notes, Perez seemingly all at sea with the RB19's requirements during his first running on the morning of day

two, with Verstappen then losing some time in the afternoon to a small reliability “teething issue”, according to chief engineer Gianpiero Lambiase. But these were drowned out by the rest of the Red Bull symphony performing pitch-perfectly, with the RB19 best of all the new cars in Bahrain's (limited) high-speed corners across all three days. Engine power modes are of course unknown, but the team rarely, if ever, shows its hand on this aspect outside race event qualifying. Perez's second-day issues may have been made worse by the added sensitivity to the wind that all the new machines are encountering thanks to the raised floor edges and diffuser throats mandated for 2023. But Red Bull insiders insist that the RB19 is built to suit both its drivers: oversteer master Verstappen, plus Perez and his preference for a less-biting front end.

Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko reckoned that the team had produced long-run times that “were clearly or at least faster than those of the competition”. And this was underlined by the laps logged across the test, particularly relevant from day two >>



Relaxed atmosphere
at Red Bull is a worrying
sign for the rest

SUTTON

onwards, given the circuit had started off sandy and lacking F1 rubber. Across the test, Red Bull typically did shorter runs at an obviously standardised fuel level rather than the race-sim-type running that Mercedes and Ferrari carried out on the final morning, which featured grid-style tyre warm-ups and burnouts in the pitlane from George Russell and Leclerc.

But when Red Bull ran longer, Verstappen's 12-lap stint pace of 1m37.546s in day two's second session came in very similar to Russell's 13-lap stint on C2 hards (1m37.786s). Verstappen's run was completed on C3s mediums, not the more durable C2s fitted to a Mercedes likely lower on fuel, given the team appeared to be simulating typical race burn-off. Leclerc's long running for Ferrari at the same time as Russell featured Red Bull-like shorter stint lengths. His C3 pace compared intriguingly with Russell in coming in 0.6s down on their best averages, and was also nearly 2.3s slower than Verstappen on average on the same compound. But the cooler temperatures and likely fuel difference for Verstappen's second-day run are obvious caveats in the discrepancies. Nevertheless, Leclerc's pace on softs after swapping from the mediums was encouraging. He was a touch inconsistent on times, but tyre life was there at the end of a nine-lap stint where he lapped nearly 0.2s quicker than his initial effort. Ferrari appeared unconcerned about its tyre management swings across the compounds on this race sim.

When Carlos Sainz took over in the SF-23 for the final afternoon, Ferrari didn't engage in the late-session performance run 'shootout' completed by its 'Class A' rivals. Leclerc had popped in an impressive 1m31.024s on the C4s a few hours earlier in the sweltering sunny conditions and, when Sainz also took that rubber with two and a

half hours of testing left, he ended up just 0.01s off his team-mate before going back to high-fuel work. Leclerc's quickest effort therefore stood as the fourth quickest time of the test overall, behind the two leaders at Red Bull and Mercedes and the interloping Alfa, this time through Bottas's 1m30.827s, also on the C5s.

But Ferrari surely heads into the 2023 season as Red Bull's biggest threat, largely because of how its new challenger was tracked performing compared to its predecessor, and because Mercedes seemingly continues to play catch-up with its unique design approach. The SF-23 ran without reliability drama and, also significantly, showed a strength lacking last year: straightline prowess. GPS trace data showed the Ferrari performing with the best end-of-straight speed of all cars and it could pack a punch off the corners too. This was a feature of the downforce-packing F1-75 from 2022, but Ferrari intends to marry that turn of speed with a more aerodynamically efficient car this time around to take on a key Red Bull strength from last season.

Leclerc suggests that Ferrari has indeed produced "a less draggy car", with an apparently more powerful engine, according to Ferrari power unit customer team boss Gunther Steiner of Haas. The SF-23 has altogether skinnier rear wing packages, with Ferrari trialling different arrangements throughout the test – it went going lower-drag on day two and higher on day three. But, critically, Leclerc struck a notably realistic note on his 2023 title ambitions when he acknowledged that the changes Ferrari has made from the F1-75 to the SF-23 meant it's "struggling a little bit more in the corners". The issue, he explained, was that, with the altered aero profile, Ferrari is "still working quite a bit to find the sweet spot of the car in terms of set-up". The team also had to "scan all the options", said new team principal Fred Vasseur, on set-up for future development, which left its drivers unsure on the best handling.

The good news is that, theoretically, Ferrari can find the right balance and therefore maintain track position in races using the qualifying edge from 2022 that Red Bull is thought to fear the Italian team may still possess. Leclerc's soft-tyre pace at the conclusion of his third-day race run is also encouraging on the tyre-life front, while Ferrari is adamant that its porpoising problem has been eradicated by the 2023 design rule tweaks.

And the same can be said at Mercedes, which also had to engineer out the W13's horribly stiff ride – the 'bouncing' phenomenon rather than porpoising. Rear-end oscillating seen at both squads on the

“The SF-23 ran without reliability drama and showed a strength lacking last year: straightline prowess”



Could Verstappen be
about to start a run
to a title hat-trick?

TEE



Mercedes and Ferrari
have both evolved
their 2022 concepts

test's opening day was explained by apparently bigger track surface bumps towards the end of the main straight and midway through the Turn 12 right than in 2022. It also emerged that many of the teams had been setting up their cars on day one with the intention of triggering porpoising via extreme low set-ups, to discover where to avoid going on such choices in the coming race events.

Mercedes' mood at its launch had been notably negative, but this seemed to swing around on the opening day when it realised that its altered suspension layouts had solved the old car's ride stiffness issue. But its drivers weren't gushing with praise for the W14's handling balance, with Hamilton saying that "some of the balance limitations that we had last year are present".

This followed Mercedes' second day not going to plan as it "struggled to get the car balanced well across the changing conditions", in the words of trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin. Plus, Russell stopped with 90 minutes of that day remaining due to a hydraulic pump problem that meant the part had to be replaced overnight. There was a sense that Mercedes was almost relieved it could crack into the overnight investigation to find the cause of the balance loss. This did lead to "progress" on day three, according to Shovlin, who added that "both drivers felt the car was in a much better place across the range of conditions and the balance is closer to what they require on single lap and long run".

In both categories, the W14 does appear much more stable and compliant than its predecessor, albeit with regular rear-end sliding. Hamilton's final-session performance running (where he finished 0.359s adrift of Perez, having pushed twice on the C5s after a C4 sighter that came in 0.94s down on the test's best time) regularly featured wobbles and time lost in the final few corners of the lap, which suggests he was struggling to keep his softs in shape. Bahrain's coarse surface type will have played a part in that, and indeed it's an important caveat when assessing everything seen in the event just gone and the one upcoming, since it creates something of an outlier situation for the teams.

Hamilton completed a final-day long run that didn't compare brilliantly with Verstappen's similar stint on day two, with a 1.2s difference on best averages. He says Mercedes doesn't "know where we will be [this] week". But, in any case, it's in a much stronger position than this time a year ago. Plus, the sidepod design changes team boss Toto Wolff hinted at during the W14's launch are still thought to be in the works. Mercedes is hopeful that the thin spread of races during the season's early months means it can use its development plan to close the gap to Red Bull it clearly still feels remains.

So far, all so 2022. But there looks to be a change at the front of the crowded midfield. Aston Martin's test performance was so smooth and strong — beyond the questions regarding Lance Stroll's mountain

bike crash injury making the team unsure on who would partner Fernando Alonso in the season opener — that some have it down as a threat to Mercedes.

That would be impressive, but at the very least the green team seems to have made a major step compared to its downforce-lacking, badly porpoising initial stab at a new ground-effects car from early 2022. It has refined its Red Bull-style aero concept, which has resulted in a handling balance position that had Alonso, still seemingly in a 'honeymoon' period with his latest new squad, stroking the AMR23 around consistently and apparently rather easily all through testing. His pace was good enough to set the second and third fastest times on days one and two respectively without needing the softer tyre compounds. And although Aston ended up down in seventh in the overall test times, it has been suggested that Alonso's final evening C4 1m31.450s wasn't done on a true qualifying simulation and that a bigger gain was being eyed.

"There is a lot of potential left for us to unlock and I think we are in a decent place," concluded Alonso, who was joined on days one and three by reserve driver, 2022 F2 champion and potential Stroll replacement Felipe Drugovich. The Brazilian was aboard for Aston's only reliability drama — right at the start of the test — when an electrical problem triggered a sensor failure.

Alonso's former squad, Alpine, might be in a position to pose quite the 2023 storyline subplot battle against Aston as best of the rest, but its place in the possible pecking order is tough to unpick. This is because it plumped for a "conservative" overall run plan, according to Esteban Ocon, that featured little in the way of performance efforts. Indeed, Alpine propped up the timesheets with a 2.5s gap to Red Bull's best — but it avoided the red-walled rubber and could yet be the midfield leader.

The team is understood to be bringing a significant upgrade package to this weekend's race and it would be logical to think that it did not want to go chasing car balance understanding on lower fuel given its references may be about to change. Whatever happens, Alpine will be hoping the update improves its ride quality, which appeared very stiff on the final day and at one point had Ocon locking up so badly at Turn 1 that he needed the whole run-off area behind the right-hander to slow down. But Ocon is nevertheless retaining his launch-event positivity, claiming "the car is much more stable in entry of corners".

Two lower-midfield teams were, overall, rather more upbeat than the rest: Haas and Alfa. At the former, when asked on the final day if the 2023 pre-season represented the best test so far for his team, Steiner claimed "preparation-wise, yes, absolutely, and also running-wise". The US team showed well on single-lap pace, with Kevin Magnussen getting close to the Ferrari drivers' times during the final performance runs on day three, the Dane running the C4s. >>

After lost major running time across both tests in 2022, Haas was delighted to concede just a little on day one this time around due to a minor throttle problem.

“We hit the targets we set ourselves,” concluded Steiner, who helms a happy camp at the moment. It’s one thought to be boosted by the reassurance of stability from its new title-sponsorship cash pushing it up to the cost-cap limit, and being rid of the distractions of Nikita Mazepin’s backing disappearing as a result of Russia’s Ukraine invasion this time a year ago.

According to Bottas, Alfa has “stepped up as a team in terms of the quality of the car”, which “feels better than last year”. The Sauber-run operation was another that did much better on testing reliability than in 2022, but it did lose time with a start systems issue for Zhou late on day two, while Bottas ground to a halt with a suspected engine problem on the final morning and caused a red flag. This is “under investigation” by supplier Ferrari. Alfa’s C5 efforts on days two and three got it among the leaders, while it also benefits from the improved Ferrari engine power alongside Haas.

Going from contented camps to a frustrated one, McLaren is surely not set for a *really* dramatic tumble down the true pecking order given the small evolution factor of stable rules under a cost cap, plus being armed with two rapid drivers. But it definitely had the hardest test of all. McLaren logged the fewest laps – just 312 – with its running blighted by needing to reinforce its front top/inside wheel covers on day three, a recurrence of a problem that meant the team encountered delays on day one working “to prevent a failure” in the same area, according to new team principal Andrea Stella. But really rather more concerning were the handling messages coming from Norris and new signing Oscar Piastri, who said the MCL60 felt like it had “limitations” that are “similar to last year”.

Norris reckons the car “handles in a reasonably similar way” to the MCL36 of 2022, which means it’s a difficult beast to get stopped and turned in as desired. And this was evidenced during Autosport’s trackside observations of the orange machine, which appeared to be the most recalcitrant of the pack and likely relying on the potential of the team’s Baku (round four) planned upgrade package to deliver the handling its drivers require.

Currently, the MCL60 also has a problem with “aerodynamic efficiency”, according to Stella, which most likely means it’s heavy on drag running down the straights and so, when the team takes out downforce in reaction, this makes it harder for its drivers to be quick

“McLaren could yet spring a surprise, but it is starting the 2023 season once again on the back foot”



and smooth in the corners. McLaren could yet spring a surprise, but it’s starting the 2023 season once again on the back foot, despite Norris also saying “we’re definitely in a better place”.

The small design changes from 2022 are likely to bear out in limited performance potential gains year on year, which brings us to AlphaTauri and Williams, the teams that brought up the rear of the field last year.

Red Bull’s sister squad didn’t make much of a splash throughout testing, other than in headlines that linked it to a possible sale and Tsunoda slotting AlphaTauri into fifth in the overall times with a smooth C4 run late in the final day. Although the AT04’s handling was somewhat unremarkable viewed trackside, that time bodes reasonably well given it was set on rubber a step harder than the C5s Bottas used to produce Alfa’s best. So too does AlphaTauri topping the mileage tally with 456 laps completed as it ran reliably, even while it picked up what chief race engineer Jonathan Eddolls described as “results that were not quite as expected” on its set-up evaluations.

Williams headed only Alpine in the overall times, but it was second only to AlphaTauri in terms of laps completed as it churned smoothly and fully through its planned programmes. Unlike Alpine, its best times on days two and three came using the C5 rubber and with the grip gains supplied by the softer compound.

“We’re definitely in a better place in comparison to this time last year, it’s just more about how far we can take it,” Alex Albon said of Williams, now headed by ex-Mercedes strategy chief James Vowles. He is getting to work improving the team’s internal operations, which it hopes will lead to the long-term gains required to climb the F1 pecking order. ✎



Testing data, Bahrain, 23-25 February

Sakhir test times

POS	DRIVER	CAR	DAY ONE	DAY TWO	DAY THREE	TYRES FOR FASTEST LAP
1	Sergio Perez	Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB19	–	1m33.751s	1m30.305s	C4
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes W14	1m33.508s	1m33.954s	1m30.664s	C5
3	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari C43	1m34.558s	–	1m30.827s	C5
4	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari SF-23	1m33.267s	1m32.725s	1m31.024s	C4
5	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari SF-23	1m33.253s	1m32.486s	1m31.036s	C4
6	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT AT04	1m34.671s	1m35.708s	1m31.261s	C4
7	Kevin Magnussen	Haas-Ferrari VF-23	1m35.087s	1m33.442s	1m31.381s	C4
8	George Russell	Mercedes W14	1m34.174s	1m33.654s	1m31.442s	C5
9	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR23	1m32.866s	1m32.205s	1m31.450s	C4
10	Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari C43	1m33.723s	1m31.610s	–	C5
11	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Honda RBPT RB19	1m32.837s	1m31.650s	–	C3
12	Felipe Drugovich	Aston Martin-Mercedes AMR23	1m34.564s	–	1m32.075s	C5
13	Lando Norris	McLaren-Mercedes MCL60	1m33.462s	1m35.522s	1m32.160s	C3
14	Nyck de Vries	AlphaTauri-Honda RBPT AT04	1m34.559s	1m32.222s	1m38.244s	C4
15	Nico Hulkenberg	Haas-Ferrari VF-23	1m34.424s	1m32.466s	1m33.329s	C4
16	Logan Sargeant	Williams-Mercedes FW45	1m34.324s	1m32.549s	–	C5
17	Pierre Gasly	Alpine-Renault A523	1m34.822s	1m33.186s	1m32.762s	C3
18	Alexander Albon	Williams-Mercedes FW45	1m33.671s	–	1m32.793s	C5
19	Oscar Piastri	McLaren-Mercedes MCL60	1m34.888s	1m33.175s	1m33.655s	C3
20	Esteban Ocon	Alpine-Renault A523	1m34.871s	1m33.490s	1m33.257s	C3

The fastest time for each driver is marked in bold, with fastest time of the day in red.

Laps completed

POS	TEAM	LAPS COMPLETED	POS	DRIVER	LAPS COMPLETED
1	AlphaTauri	456	1	Alonso	270
2	Williams	439	2	de Vries	246
3	Ferrari	417	3	Sargeant	229
4	Haas	415	4	Hamilton	220
5	Red Bull	413	5	Magnussen	219
6	Alfa Romeo	402	6	Sainz	218
7	Mercedes	398	7	Albon	210
8	Aston Martin	387	8	Tsunoda	210
9	Alpine	353	9	Perez	209
10	McLaren	312	10	Verstappen	204
			11	Bottas	202
			12	Zhou	200
			13	Leclerc	199
			14	Hulkenberg	196
			15	Ocon	178
			16	Russell	178
			17	Gasly	175
			18	Piastri	170
			19	Norris	142
			20	Drugovich	117

POS	ENGINE	LAPS COMPLETED
1	Mercedes	1536
2	Ferrari	1234
3	Honda RBPT	869
4	Renault	353

TOTAL LAPS
COMPLETED
BY ALL CARS
3992

RED FLAGS
4*

p30 Trackside verdict



* Not counting those activated for FIA/F1 systems checks



GIORGIO
PIOLA

The latest battles in F1 design

The rule tweaks are only minor for 2023, but that doesn't mean there's not plenty of development — and some argument — going on up and down the paddock

MATT SOMERFIELD

SUTTON/MOTORSPORTIMAGES

With Formula 1's pre-season test in Bahrain now in the books, the 10 new car designs have shared the track together, offering a platform for technical comparisons between them. The direction that most of the field was taking this season had already been seen during their launches, but there were still many questions that needed to be answered over the three days at Sakhir.

Some of those questions are the result of the regulations remaining relatively stable, and how this might lead to further convergence up and down the field. In the areas where the regulations have changed, the teams will be looking to see whether they can recover the performance that's been lost

and find workarounds to what the FIA intended.

It's an intense time of the year for every F1 team, as they work their way through an exhaustive checklist in their own test programmes. Before the season begins, each team aims to find the various strengths and weaknesses of their new cars, check how robust their procedures are and, if time permits, maybe even have a cheeky poke around the other garages to see what everyone else is up to.

Testing was considered even more critical this season too, since the teams had just three days of running to overcome any issues, gather data that can be used for ongoing development, and work on the cars' set-up for all manner of scenarios that they'll face in the coming months. Here's what we saw in Bahrain.

Red Bull RB19 finally breaks cover



After it spent the 2023 launch season being evasive with the design of its RB19, Red Bull finally unveiled its new machinery at the pre-season test. It's clear to see that it's an evolution of its forebear, which is unsurprising given the team's superiority in 2022.

While the core DNA has been retained, the car has been embellished with many new details, and those that remain have been thoroughly optimised. The RB19's nose is similar in concept to its predecessor's, but is wider and squarer around the tip section (**roundel 1, above**). It also features a NACA-style inlet duct for driver cooling, rather than the oval design employed last season.

To match those changes, the front wing's overall design has been reworked to suit and the arched upper elements have been swapped for something more traditional (**2**).

After Red Bull acted as one of the trendsetters in the sidepod department, it's no surprise that many of the key features from the RB18 remain. The changes that have been made revolve around the much tighter bodywork and an increase in the length and depth of the sidepod undercut (**3**).

The sidepod's flank is now flatter and results in a deeper underbelly that fuses with the ramped section at the rear. This not only helps boost the aerodynamic performance of the sidepod but also frees up potential in the floor edge. It's here where Red Bull has perhaps made its most obvious changes, reacting to the alterations in the regulations that require the outermost portion to be raised.

This has resulted in revisions to the floor's edge, with a C-shaped cut-out that's arched upward at its trailing edge to create a wing profile. This cut-out is accentuated by the edge wing, which is similarly shaped in this region to create a pair of winglets that will work in conjunction with one another, before the edge wing follows the contours of the floor.

Red Bull has also made changes to the airbox for 2023 (**4**), making the inlet smaller, which has the net benefit of reducing the size of the car's centreline and results in an optimisation to the shelf-like section of the engine cover. The cooling gill panel has also been repositioned as a consequence, with the panel now draped over the shelf's corner, rather than on top of it, allowing the airflow passing by to be less affected by the heat being rejected by the internal components.

Mercedes responds to 2022 wing clampdown

Tasked with regulating the all-new car concept put forward by F1, the FIA had to fight the teams on several fronts throughout 2022. And, in order to help retain the original design intent of certain aspects of the car, the regulations have been revised for this season.

One area where this was considered important was with the design of the outboard section of the front wing and the endplate. Under the previous regulations, teams were constantly looking for ways to increase the amount of outwash that could be generated here, which altered the airflow's passage around the front tyre and in turn helped with the floor's performance.

As part of an update package for the Miami Grand Prix last May, Mercedes introduced a design that carefully negotiated the competing regulations that govern this region. This required the outermost section of the flaps to be angled

back on themselves, opening up a space in the lower section of the endplate, because the flaps were no longer connected to it (1).

The FIA looked at this solution and made significant changes to article 3.9.3 of the technical regulations for 2023, in order to prevent this sort of design.

The perennial problem for the FIA is that without rewriting the entirety of that article and the ones adjacent to them that also have a bearing, the teams will continue to poke holes in them – quite literally in this case, as the W14 emerged with a similar solution to last season, albeit adapted to suit the changes that had been made to the regulations.

In this instance, the mainplane has a much deeper chord, where it connects to the endplate, than its predecessor. The flaps thereafter are no longer angled back on themselves, rather the rearward flaps have been rolled over and sit slightly inboard of the endplate in order that each element creates its own tip section (2).



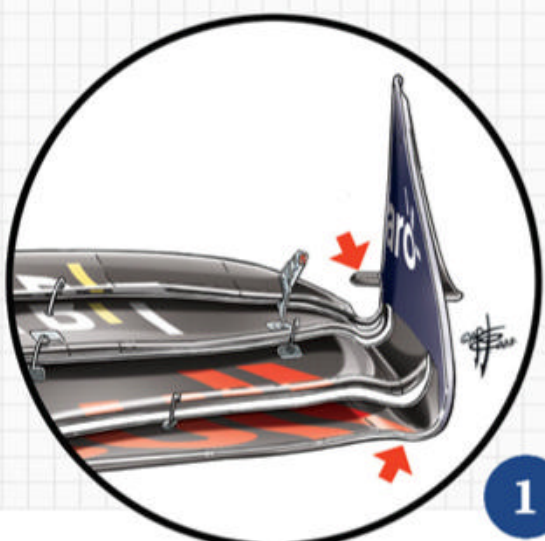
To comply with the regulations, each flap is connected to the endplate with a slender metal support bracket, which also allows for each flap to be stepped away from the main body of the endplate.

Front-wing winglets hint at prevailing trend

Mercedes was not on its own in noting the possibility of housing winglets on the inboard rear corner of the endplate – they can also be found on both the Haas VF-23 and Red Bull RB19.

There are obvious differences in the make-up of their solutions when compared with Mercedes', but their intent will be similar: encouraging more outwash than would ordinarily be available without the winglet in place.

Red Bull has the most simplistic winglet of the trio, a single element mounted with a minimal angle of attack applied to it (1).

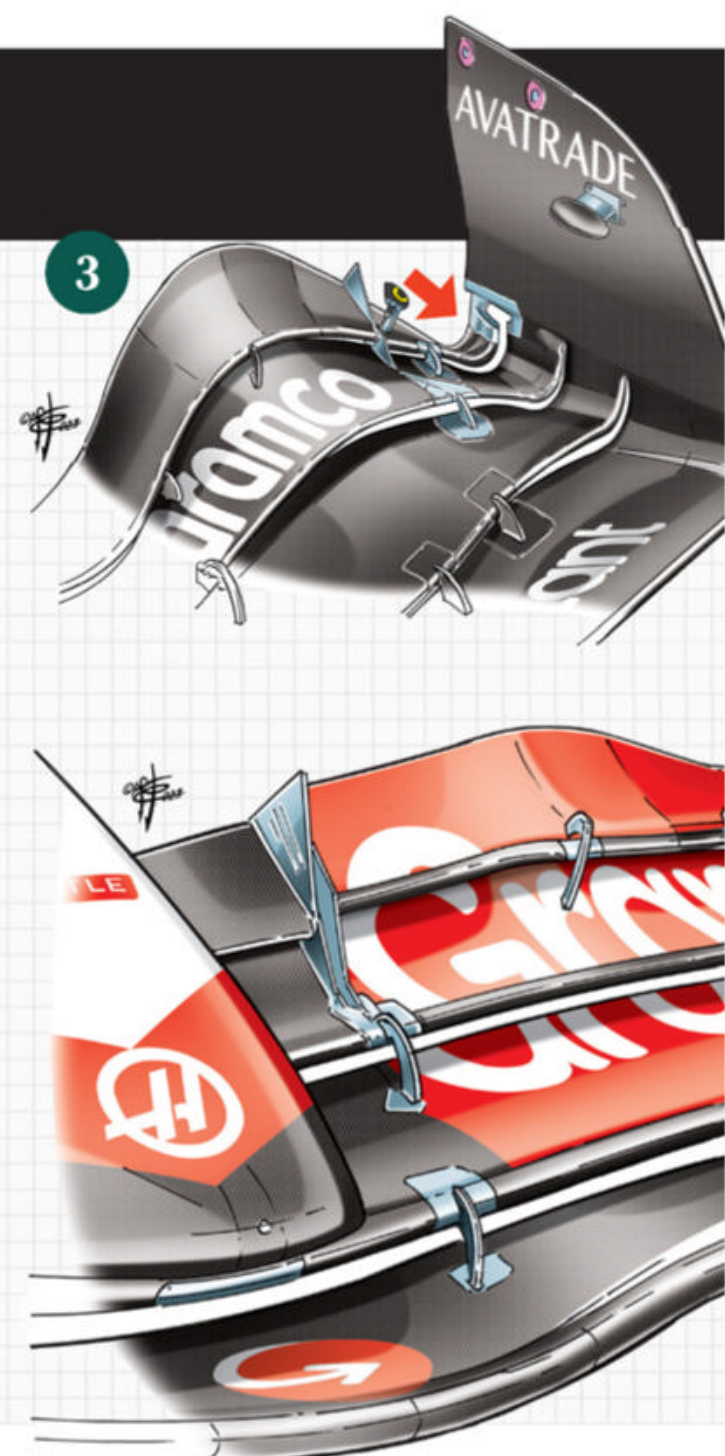


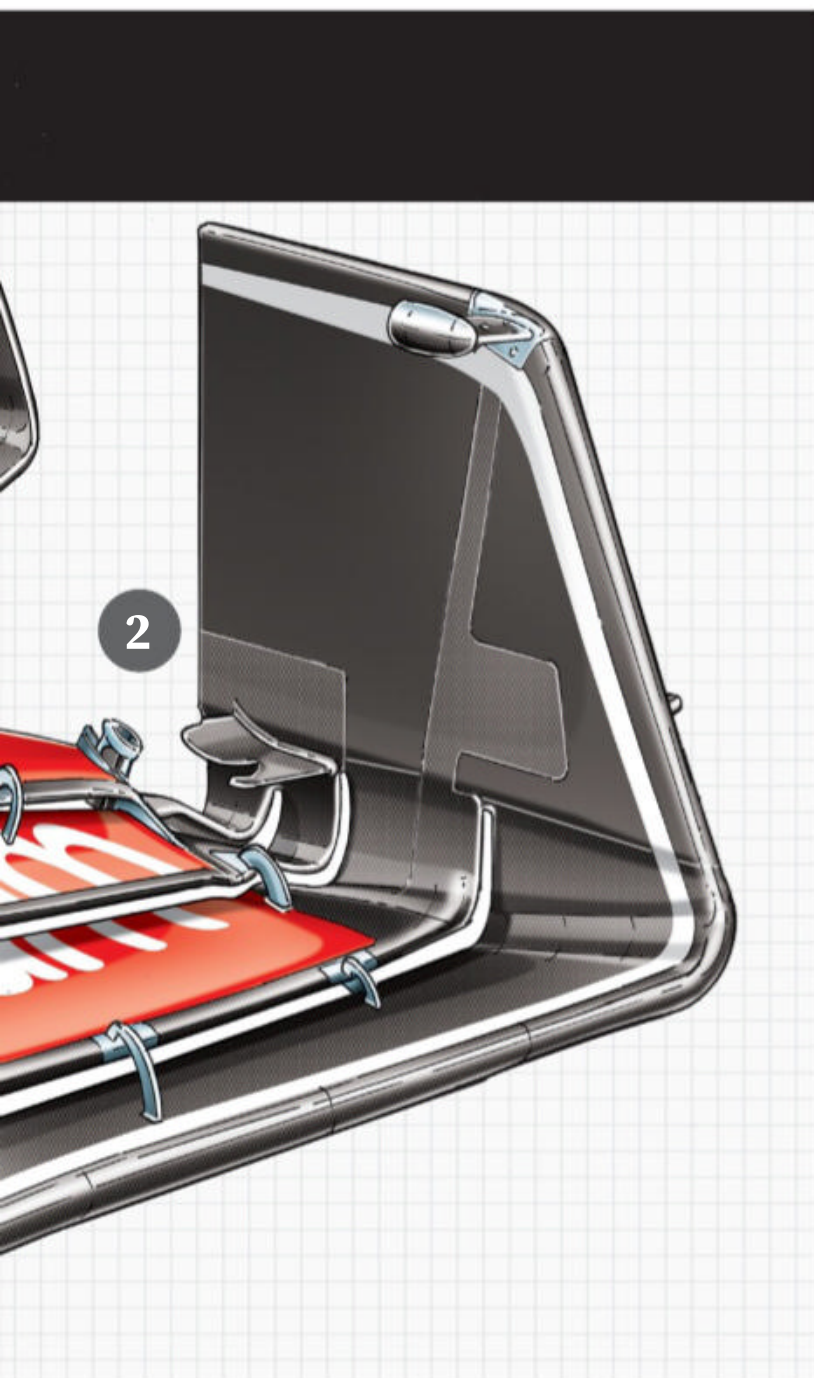
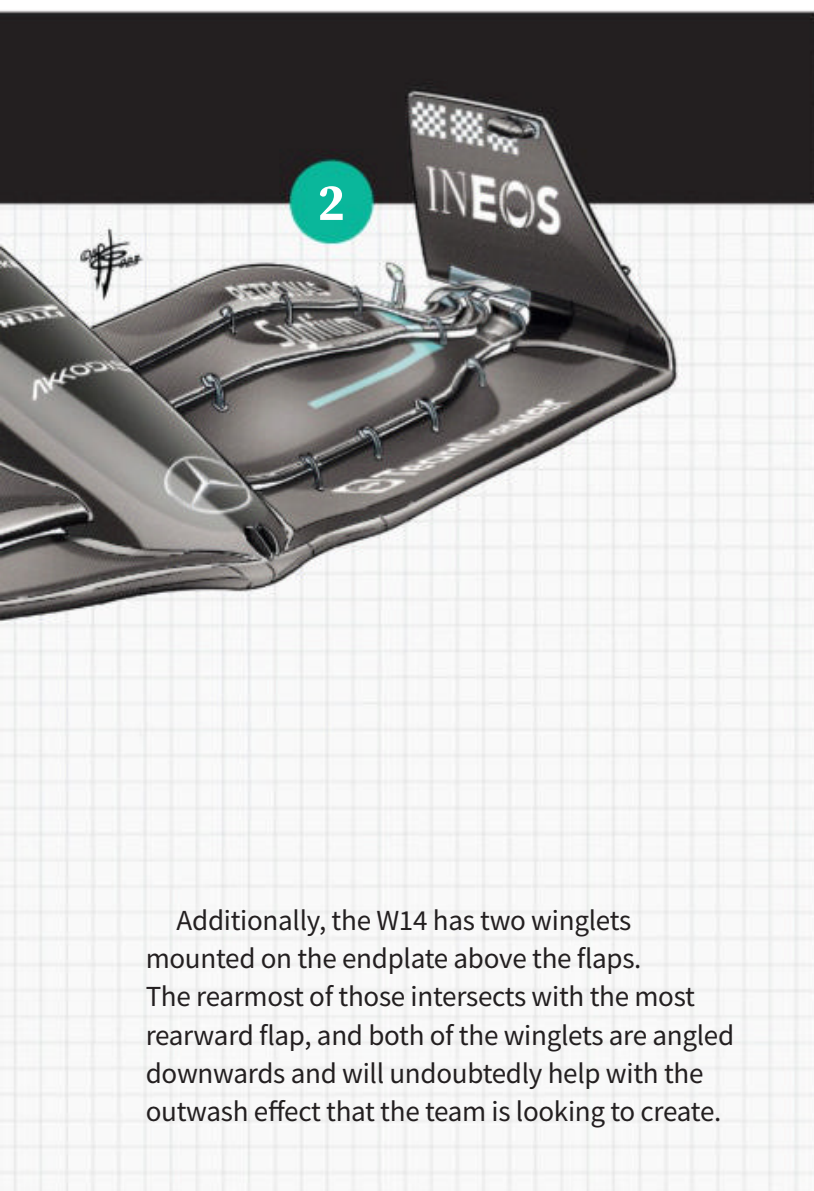
The winglet should enhance flow in the outboard portion of the wing, with the elements both wound tightly and angled outwards as they meet and follow the contours of the endplate.

Haas has also mounted a winglet in the lower rear inboard corner of the endplate but, by comparison, it's opted for something a little longer (2). Its winglet also has a slot midway along the surface that creates a two-tier arrangement and aligns with the slot gap in the last two front-wing flaps below.

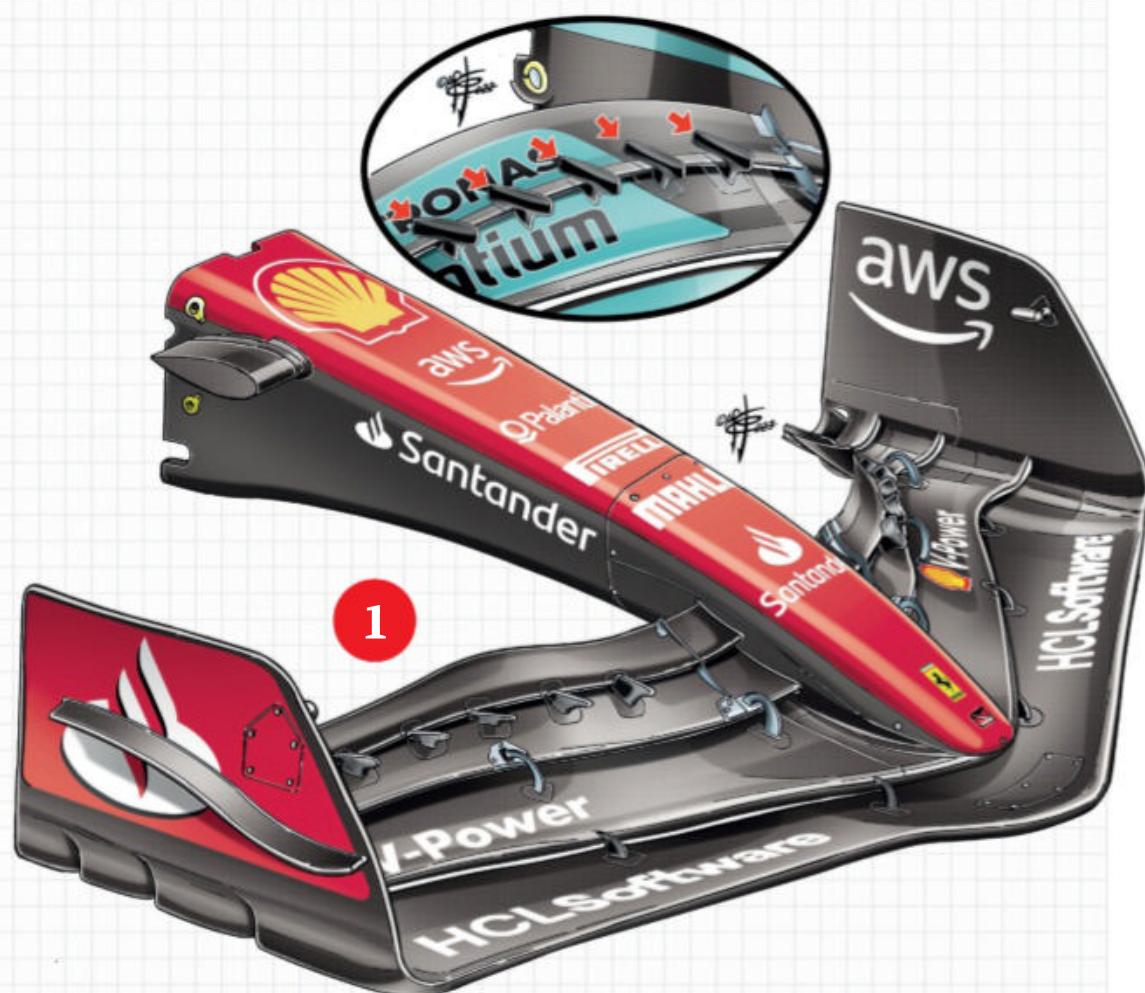
Aston Martin also played around with this region of its front wing, albeit in a slightly different way to the aforementioned designs since the Silverstone squad hasn't added a winglet, but rather looked for a different way to connect the upper flap to the endplate (3). The aim again is to help create more outwash than the regulations intend, helping to alter the wake created by the tyre behind and improve the performance of the floor downstream.

In order to achieve this, the upper flap isn't fully connected to the endplate and its angle is skewed relative to the endplate above, while a metal insert takes care of any structural issues this might create.





Ferrari bares its front-wing teeth



Ferrari revealed a front-wing-design solution at the launch of the SF-23 that many had considered consigned to the long list of items that F1 had banned before they had ever seen the light of day (1).

This is a design solution that Mercedes had looked to introduce last season but was quickly quashed by the FIA (inset) when the governing body raised questions over the primary purpose of the slot-gap separator brackets. Given their shape and position, they appeared to offer more of an aerodynamic purpose than the horseshoe-style brackets everyone traditionally uses.

The FIA asked that they be removed and, even though Mercedes felt it could argue compliance, it opted to race its new specification of wing without them, because it was also plausible that a rival could protest the design if it were raced.

Following these discussions, the

FIA made changes to the regulations for 2023, deleting the section in question (strikethrough):

"The following components will be permitted in addition to the Front Wing Assembly: ~~for primarily mechanical, structural or measurement reasons...~~"

This was supplanted in the slot gap separator section as follows:

*"Up to eight slot gap separator brackets, per side of the car, which connect **provide a structural connection between** consecutive FW Profiles. **These Each** brackets must..."*

In that, there is no mention of a primary function in the new section (in bold), since it's very difficult for the FIA to argue how much influence a component has, given everything has an influence over the air passing around the car.

This means that the slot-gap brackets first run by Mercedes and seen on the Ferrari are now compliant and might be a solution that others apply their own interpretation of at some point during 2023.



Keep up with our technical experts' insight on the latest developments at [autosport.com](https://www.autosport.com)

All 10 teams ran at Sakhir last week in the single pre-season F1 test. What did we learn?

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Trackside verdict

The on-track clues from the only pre-season test

How the cars looked from the sidelines in Bahrain, and what that could tell us about the year ahead

MATT KEW

Red Bull cantered to both championships when the 2022 season resumed after the summer break. But that thankfully didn't lead to nine RB18 impersonators taking to the Bahrain International Circuit for testing last week. Pleasingly, design differentiation has stayed put for the second year of this ground-effects revolution. For now, Mercedes retains its cuttlefish-like flowing engine cover that melts into the floor; Ferrari still possesses gully sidepods; the AlphaTauri looks stocky from head-on; the Haas comes with its floating mini shark fin; and the Alpine catches the eye with a curvaceous coke-bottle rear.

But it's not all good news because there has been a convergence in another respect. This comes from the new obsession of running exposed carbon fibre in a bid to hit the minimum weight limit of

798kg. There's an abundance of unpainted and unwrapped weave, which, combined with the recent preference for a matte finish, means a few too many dull liveries. The McLaren is light on papaya and the Haas is practically monogram bar one or two red sponsor stickers. The lack of colour is fine under the Sakhir sun and, for night-time events, floodlights bouncing off bodywork will never lack for spectacle. But to amend footballing parlance, how will these look on a rainy day at Silverstone? There's a fear that the muted colours will simply fade into obscurity on camera.

A less subjective takeaway is that this year's trackside experience is not dominated by porpoising. A big bump in the Turn 1 braking zone and another halfway up the climb to Turn 12 trigger some bouncing for the more stiffly sprung cars that are easily unsettled. But the stalling aero sensation that was a throwback to the 1980s has, thankfully, now largely been demoted to being a thing of the past.

Red Bull and Ferrari at the front

Max Verstappen says he's had to modify his driving style to fully exploit the Red Bull RB19. If there is any adjustment, it's either all done and dusted by the end of the first day or it's barely perceptible from behind the catch-fencing. Ominously, the Dutchman looks as formidable as ever come day two, when Autosport heads trackside. This conclusion is mainly down to the brutality with which he attacks the left-sharp-right-left of Turns 5 to 7. The change of direction is staggering, evoking the cliché that a car is cornering 'on rails'.

While team-mate Sergio Perez ultimately tops the testing timing screens with an evening dash of 1m30.305s on the final day, the race-stint simulations completed 24 hours earlier are less convincing. Lap after lap, he makes a total hash of Turn 10. Over the course of half an hour and two Pirelli tyre compounds, there are half a dozen heavy lock-ups of the inside wheel as the taut set-up proves particularly uncompromising. When there's not a trail of smoke billowing off the rubber, you can still make out the precise writing on the sidewall given how much the wheel is underrotating. The outcome is that sometimes Perez can keep the car on the island, but on plenty of other occasions he sends the Red Bull well wide and must depart the asphalt altogether and take to the dusty run-off before rejoining some way down the back straight.

The nature of this struggling initially seems particularly peculiar for Perez, who had something of an intra-team edge early last term before the RB18 went on a crash diet to eliminate the understeer that Verstappen loathes. Perez was usually more on top of a tricky front axle, and the Mexican's testing plight can still be symptomatic of a skittish rear. Given how the backs of the cars go light



The Verstappen-RB19 combo looked potent

over the crest before the braking zone into Turn 10, if a driver is applying steering lock and the fronts suddenly begin to grip, they can snap wide.

For the non-Red Bull fans craving at least a two-way fight for the spoils, the early clues are not overwhelmingly positive. Ferrari has a recent obsession with beating Red Bull at its own game by paying most attention to maximising downforce. But as Carlos Sainz

found out to his cost in 2022 with the nervous F1-75, this comes at the expense of lower-speed mechanical grip. That carried-over habit is then exacerbated in Bahrain by Ferrari chasing a couple of understeer-inducing set-up extremes that leave Charles Leclerc a little frustrated. All told, through this middle sector, the SF-23 is certainly impressive but not quite the showstopper that the RB19 appears to be.



Charles Leclerc in the new SF-23. Will he find a fruitful set-up when it counts?

Mercedes still searching for more



No bounce – but will they have a spring in their step?

SUTTON

Each day the mood in the Mercedes camp shifts. After running first on Thursday, there is positivity that porpoising has been eradicated. The following lunchtime, concern has arisen from both drivers that set-up tweaks have upset car balance before a hydraulics issue sends George Russell for an early bath after just 26 laps. But overnight repairs and a raft of settings changes put the black W14 back closer to its sweet spot from the opening laps on Saturday morning. The view behind the barriers helpfully corroborates the fluctuating sentiment.

Where Ferrari and McLaren are the worst offenders through the Turn 12 sweeping right-hander, with the cars being caught out by a mid-corner bump and then rebounding in a shower of sparks, the Mercedes looks largely unflappable late on in the day-one dusk. But, even with the hotter temperatures

considered, Lewis Hamilton is more notably unsettled the following morning. With Turn 10 proving the greatest differentiator, here the Mercedes has a few misses as the car breaks loose mid-corner to force the seven-time champion well wide. More notable and persistent is the squirming from the rear under power that forces several time-wasting corrections as Hamilton is heavy with the throttle.

Both seem happier behind the wheel for the final runout on day three. Hamilton is again eager with his right foot to instigate a couple of cases of corrective lock during heavy acceleration through the Turn 11 ascent. But the car tucks in neatly and is much less hesitant at the front axle. At this stage, that's not enough to rule the Brackley winter resurrection to be a roaring success and to make Red Bull particularly worried. But it's a far cry from the bouncing Mercedes mess of a year ago.



Russell's running in the W14 was interrupted by a hydraulics problem

S BLOXHAM

Promising signs: Alonso looked planted in green



F

uel tanks can be brimmed and tyres rock-hard and several stints old to provide a smokescreen, but a fundamentally good chassis will still shine through. As such, even if McLaren was deliberately running its MCL60 in the worst state in testing to hide its hand, this still looks to be a difficult car to drive. And that's the opposite of what star driver Lando Norris requested for 2023. He didn't necessarily want ultimate performance, just an end to the recent run of bad-handling creations in papaya and black.

As he barrels into Turn 1, it's clear that the Briton isn't comfortable on the brakes. It takes an age to get the car stopped. Adding to his plight, every so often there's a hefty lock-up. When it's finally slow enough to turn to the right, the driver is met with a wave of understeer. It's frustrating to watch, let alone to drive. Time and time again, the apex is barely troubled. When the track then kinks left for the much less severe Turn 2, he's off line. That forces the Briton to take to the outer, serrated edge of the rumble strip, where the car squirms again as it's easily deflected by the harsh vibrations and is grounding out.

Aston Martin takes the plaudits...



MAUGER

The off-camber, downhill Turn 10 left-hander serves as a lie-detector test for handling balance. Given the slanted asphalt, too stiff a set-up will result in locked inside wheels. The slow apex speed exposes any mid-corner understeer before a critical lack of traction makes itself known when the cars get back on the power at around 40mph. The new Aston Martin almost never displays any of these unwelcome traits during testing. This helps make the team the star performer in Bahrain as it chases the ‘most-improved’ accolade in 2023.

With Fernando Alonso in the cockpit, this is a car that can dance. Even on the medium-compound Pirellis that are crying mercy in the scorching temperatures on the second day, it’s super-lithe. There’s no running wide. The biggest impression is left by how early the double world champion can get back on the

accelerator. Observing from the inside of the corner, there’s a trio of painted segments of kerb immediately after the bollard that denotes the apex. The Alpine and AlphaTauri wait until they’re clear of all three before picking up the throttle. But Alonso is back stamping on the loud pedal while still in line with the white second strip. The rear end wiggles a little under load and requires some corrective steering lock, but it looks manageable – a sign of agility rather than instability.

It’s a similarly promising spectacle down at the wider Turn 11. Here, Alonso prefers to open the corner by positioning the AMR23 far over the outside kerb before violently jinking the steering wheel to the left. The Aston is all too happy to respond before scampering up the hill and out of sight. All in all, it’s a vast improvement over the cumbersome launch-spec machine that Sebastian Vettel had to labour around this layout this time last year.

...as McLaren digs in for a tough start



SUTTON

These characteristics are particularly concerning because they combine to create the exact same headache that had Norris immensely frustrated throughout last year. Car balance was wayward and hugely inconsistent from one corner to another. It’s all well and good that the design team has mimicked a Red Bull sidepod and is planning effectively a

‘B-spec’ car for the trip to Baku in April. But that the Woking whizzes haven’t addressed arguably the most fundamental shortcoming to leave Norris and rookie Oscar Piastri lacking in confidence is particularly egregious.

The MCL60 looks to be the among the more stubborn of the 10 cars at low speed. That’s not to say it will be downright slow. Eating Alpine’s

dust and slipping behind Aston Martin come the end of the season is more likely how the story will unfold rather than this historic team regressing to the very bottom. But the more usual backmarkers in Williams and Haas look less dramatic by comparison, even if their drivers have to back off more through the downforce-dependent Turns 5-7 slalom.

At 38, Lewis Hamilton heads into his 11th season with Mercedes – after his only winless year in F1



Mercedes

Will Lewis Hamilton have what it takes to bounce back?

The nasty surprise of Mercedes' fall from grace last year has left him cautious. But that old faith in his team remains as solid as it has ever been

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

“Different!” laughs Lewis Hamilton. But something is the same. The Mercedes driver is facing the media at his team’s Silverstone pre-season shakedown filming day, but the conversation is taking place via Zoom. Eco- and cost-friendly, easier to manage prying questions, better to keep things hidden.

No Formula 1 team wants stories about its new car leaking out early, so this is an understandable arrangement. But, despite the sky-high interest in the performance capabilities of the new W14, rumours nevertheless surface that things don’t go completely to plan for the new machine’s initial running...

A supposedly tricky shakedown was followed by a successful 100km filming exercise the next day, Mercedes was keen to stress. But as the first race of 2023 in Bahrain finally arrived on F1’s horizon, there was talk of Mercedes’ wind tunnel numbers not hitting the desired targets for the W14’s aerodynamic potential, of tricky simulator sessions aimed at understanding early handling cues. This, combined with an intense desire to under-promise and over-deliver, adds up to a very different sounding and feeling Hamilton from 2022.

When the W13 was launched 13 months ago, the seven-time

world champion was confidently predicting the F1 world was about to see him hit even greater heights than he’d managed in that epic 2021 title battle with Max Verstappen. He came out with fighting talk, clearly focused on wresting his crown straight back from Red Bull’s Dutch star. And then came Bahrain testing – the second of two tests in 2022 – that revealed Mercedes’ ‘zeropod’ design concept was prone to extreme porpoising and dramatic ride issues. For the first time in his F1 career, Hamilton went a season winless and pole-less. Having experienced such a severe expectations reset in early 2022, the theme running through Hamilton’s pre-season words this time around is ‘restraint’.

“I wouldn’t say I’m bullish like I was last year,” he explains. “I would say just ‘more cautious’. Hopefully we hit the ground running, but it’s not always the case. We showed last year that, with whatever we’re faced with, we can recover. So, that’s what we’ll try and do this year.

“Last year I was bullish because they [Mercedes’ design team] were bullish. We had big upgrades coming and I was like, ‘Right, we’re going to be coming to hit hard!’ But, obviously, it was a shock to all of us [what happened with the car]. So, I think this year everyone is a lot more grounded. More of the approach of, ‘We perhaps won’t be the fastest out of the gate, but we have the potential to close.’”

“I wouldn’t say I’m bullish like I was last year. I would say just ‘more cautious’. Hopefully we hit the ground running”

From its years at the top of the F1 pile, Mercedes has the expectation management game mastered – although it clearly needed something of a refresher course ahead of 2022. It remains perfectly possible that the W14 will be in victory contention from the off in Bahrain. After all, Mercedes clearly sees promise in the evolved ‘zeropod’ design and its potential to significantly complement downforce generated by underfloor aero surfaces with its wide floor, or it would have moved away from the concept. But there’s a sense this is a last hurrah for the striking design, with team members openly talking about bringing big upgrades that would change the sidepods early in the campaign if required and Mercedes is indeed off the pace at the season opener as its downbeat launch mood forecasts.

Hamilton, having dived into making extreme set-up choices in >>



Hamilton hopes he can bid for a record eighth world title

TEE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas grab a chance to check out the new Red Bull

a bid to solve the W13's problems in the early 2022 events, is committed to helping his team finally get back into contention, no matter where it starts this time. "I've said it over and over again, but this is family to me," he explains. "It's no coincidence that we've won world championships in the past. You don't all of a sudden just lose the ability to be able to do so. I have the utmost confidence in all the people I've been around.

"When I sit in the office that I've been coming to for now the 11th year we all say, 'Jeez, it's been a long time!' But everyone is still excited to work together. It doesn't feel old, it still feels fresh."

After a decade at Mercedes, it's clear what Hamilton would like the 11th machine produced by his Brackley family to do compared to the W13. Keep the race pace and tyre management edge it generally showed on Sundays last year, but restore a calmer ride, smooth corner progression without porpoising or bouncing on a near rock solid suspension (tweaked on both axles on the W14 in a bid to do so) and restore braking confidence. The last point is a vital part of Hamilton's game – a key to his qualifying speed, plus his famously excellent racecraft.

After returning from the off-season "very positive, motivated, energised – maybe the best so far I've seen in those 10 years", per Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, Hamilton is continuing with the expanded workload he's been doing for the past 18 months. After realising how all-out he'd have to go to take on Verstappen,

"We all say, 'Jeez, it's been a long time!' But everyone is still excited to work together. It doesn't feel old, it's still fresh"

Hamilton has been doing "more simulator running than I've ever done", training even on Christmas day "running up a mountain" and completing Pirelli tyre testing work he'd previously eschewed this winter at Jerez.

Even if the W14 isn't a winner from the off, it will at least evoke powerful memories of the two most recent Hamilton success seasons – 2020 and 2021 and the black livery Mercedes put on the W11s and W12s to highlight motorsport's diversity problems and global racial inequality at the Briton's urging. Mercedes is back in black primarily to run at the 798kg weight limit it never hit in 2022 with swathes of naked carbon fibre lower down on the W14, but Hamilton is pleased "it's all out for performance".

Hamilton says "it's not necessarily how it looks, it's about how quick it goes", but either way on the speed front his new car's



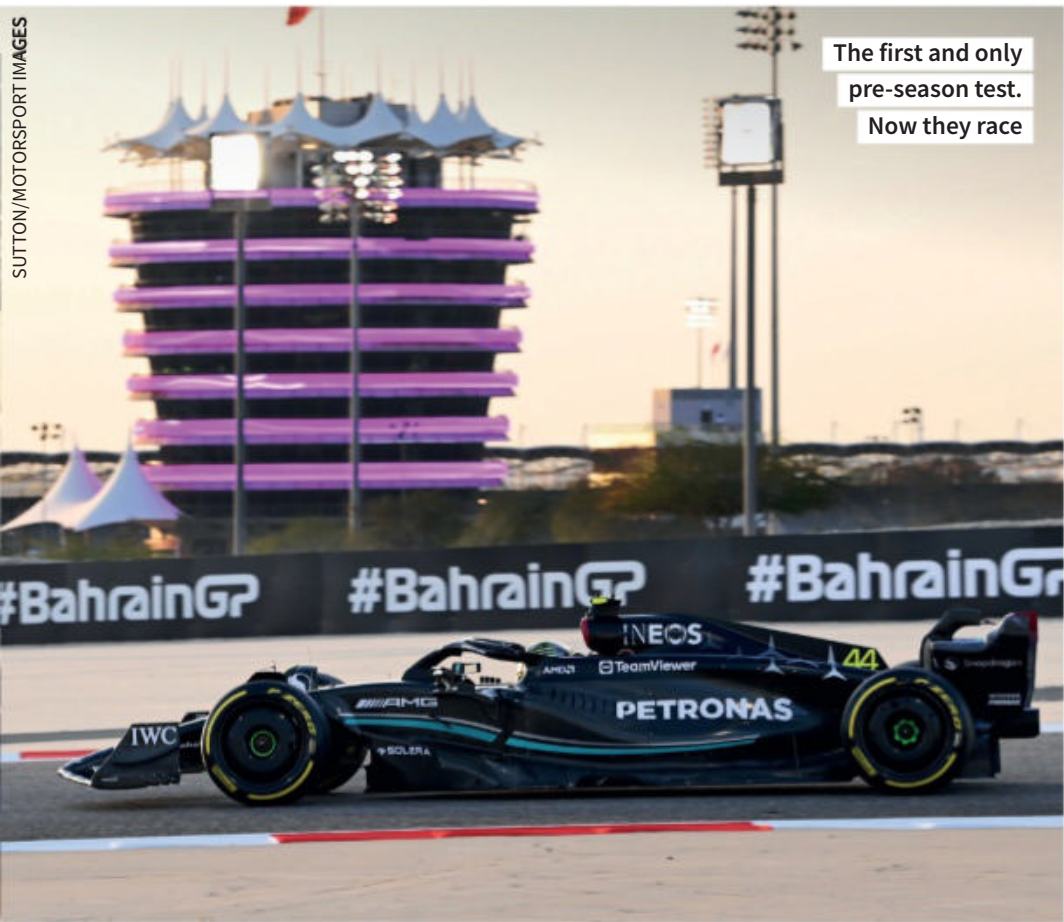
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Back in black: use of bare carbon fibre on new W14 is a sign of weight saving

SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



The first and only
pre-season test.
Now they race

performance will have a major bearing on the story of his season. That's for the obvious reasons based on results, but also because he and Wolff have held "a first chat" – according to the Austrian – over a contract extension beyond 2023. Hamilton is expected to sign a long-term deal, but another year in the F1 doldrums will increase speculation from certain elements that he'd rather be working on his team ownership portfolio, music and fashion passions, his F1 film starring Brad Pitt, or just surfing.

"I don't feel like I need them to prove [anything] to me," he concludes on his Mercedes relationship, 10 years on from his 2013 switch from McLaren, back in the days when he had just a single world championship to his name. "I think we've proved time and again over the years that we have strength in depth. We still have all these incredibly talented individuals within the team. As I said, you don't lose that ability.

"We're continuing to try and improve our processes, we're continuing to try and be smarter in how we approach things. I think this is the best harmony within the team that I've seen in all these years. We've got a real fresh young group of engineers [including on the strategy team to replace new Williams team principal James Vowles] and people that have just come into the team over the past year as well.

"So it's an exciting time for the team and I don't plan on being anywhere else."

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Wolff and Hamilton
have started talks
about a new deal

Russell's bid to improve



S BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

The 2022 Formula 1 season might not have provided the title challenge he was hoping for after his long-awaited switch from Williams to Mercedes, but it still went well for George Russell.

The driver long groomed as the Black Arrows squad's long-term star once the Lewis Hamilton story finally concludes shone on his promotion to the F1 big time last year. It was of course boosted by the W13's problems removing the pressure of a first title challenge, trying to be the first since Nico Rosberg to beat Hamilton to a title as team-mates. There were costly low moments too. But Russell did what had long been predicted of him. Eight podiums, a pole position and that famous maiden win in Brazil. So where can he be better in 2023?

"The challenges you face are based with the tyres, the car, and every year we have new tyres, new cars," says Russell. "Definitely still room to improve and I feel that fills me with confidence because I still felt like I performed at a very high level, even though I know I've got a lot more in my pocket.

"The main one is probably just the tyre management.

"That year being team-mates with Lewis, seeing some of his traits, has been really beneficial for me"

Something I thought Lewis was very good at was maximising the stints and getting the most out of the tyres across a stint. That year under my belt being team-mates with him, seeing some of his traits, has been really beneficial for me. I feel like I was on quite a steep learning curve in that regard, but still, I feel like I've got a lot more to come."

Russell visited Mercedes' Brackley base "most weeks" during the winter, as well as continuing his trusted fitness practices. After the typical winter reset, the Grand Prix Drivers' Association director, set to start work replacing Sebastian Vettel as another active racing director during the Bahrain action, is "mentally in the strongest place I've ever been".

"In a happy place, I feel good within myself," Russell adds. "And I feel like I took the necessary time off, but equally the necessary time working with the team."

Alpine

Aiming to edge clear of the chasing pack

That doesn't sound very ambitious, does it? But when margins are this fine, it's a target forged in realism, for a team that does appear to be on the up

MATT KEW



T

he landmark ground-effects reset was conceived to bring about a more spectacular Formula 1. A rules overhaul would jumble the competitive order and, on top of that, ease the ability of closely matched cars to overtake. Regardless of the immediate success of the sweeping changes, for 2023 Alpine intends to fly in the face of those

good intentions. It wants to operate in a no man's land.

Searing Singapore heat and high altitude in Mexico wreaked havoc with the Renault engine last season. Its water pump gave up the ghost too often as well. Without the repeat failures, there wouldn't have been such a hotly contested scrap with McLaren for fourth in the 2022 constructors' championship. That's what Alpine believes. In response, for this year's A523 challenger (not named after the road connecting Greater Manchester), the powertrain division based in Viry-Chatillon has worked to reinforce the revised turbocharger layout.

Similarly, the Enstone design division has re-engineered the cooling package to further boost power at the crank. There's an all-new rear suspension configuration and a lighter chassis to boot. All told, when most teams have opted for evolution over revolution with their latest creations, Alpine has gone aggressive. It also plans to outdevelop everyone else. Factor in McLaren's muted expectations for the opening races, and suddenly Alpine's aim to close the gap to the top three while distancing itself from the rest of the midfield seems entirely feasible.

"We've got to improve," says team boss Otmar Szafnauer. "We've got to not scrape by in fourth but be solidly there and closer to third. And for us to be able to do that, we've got to develop at a higher rate than every other team. That's not easy to do. But it's the goal that we've set ourselves."

To achieve said target, Alpine has seemingly created a decent foundation. It hasn't had to waste time and effort resolving any >>

"We've got to develop at a higher rate than every other team. That's not easy to do. But it's the goal we've set"

Pierre Gasly gets to grips with his new Alpine in the Bahrain test. The team appears upbeat

SBLOXHAM

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Szafnauer sets out his targets at the Alpine team launch

McLaren warns of slow start



SUTTON/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Andrea Stella isn't the biggest fan of speaking to the media. But now, as McLaren team principal, he has no choice other than to deliver the quotes. And it appears that he's out of practice. Unlike his paddock colleagues, he's refreshingly been giving plenty away.

Stella reveals that the MCL60 requires meaningful upgrades before it's competitive and he's "not entirely happy". If the Woking squad is going to take on Alpine again to reclaim the 'best of the rest' accolade, patience may be required.

To overcome a slow start, McLaren can have no other major weak spots or spend too long getting a race-rusty rookie up to speed. Happily, Formula 2 and F3 champion Oscar Piastri is enormously highly rated. The Australian is fully expected to continue the McLaren tradition of drivers excelling out of the blocks as per Lando Norris and Lewis Hamilton. Ex-team boss Andreas Seidl reckoned it was worth flicking Daniel Ricciardo to sign his hotshot compatriot, who is seen internally as a perfect fit for the McLaren culture.

Not helping Piastri's cause is the 2022 car possessing widely inconsistent balance

"Unlike colleagues in the paddock, Stella refreshingly has been giving plenty away"

from one corner to the next. Ricciardo never found a proper affinity with the MCL36, and Norris says it took a third of the term for him to feel comfortable. Those unpredictable traits carrying over will hardly aid an F1 newcomer, especially when the underlying expectation is for Piastri to close the 0.6s gap to talismanic Norris that Ricciardo rarely did. The behaviour of the MCL60 needs to be an improvement, even if outright pace leaves plenty to be desired.

Piastri did at least keep his eye in during his year on the sidelines by driving the 2021 Alpine and last year's McLaren. But he has not enjoyed the cut and thrust of wheel-to-wheel racing since winning the F2 finale in Abu Dhabi on 12 December 2021. Piastri must adjust quickly to the midfield maelstrom, because he and his team can ill afford too many early tangles as they persevere with an initially underproved car.



New team-mates.
But will it be an
all-French love-in?

JAMES MOY PHOTOGRAPHY LTD

lingering porpoising issues, so plausibly it could have thrown the proverbial kitchen sink at the new car and been even more aggressive with its redesign. But then it would have been forced to compromise on its stream of updates to comply with the cost cap. Fortunately, some decent off-season organisation and a strict focus on the most influential aspects of the car – rather than getting bogged down in the minutiae – has helped the squad largely stick to its budget to be ready for testing. That leaves sufficient spending wiggle room to repeat the steep in-season development curve that paid off handsomely for Alpine last year.

By extension, Alpine didn't waste money relentlessly attempting to shave weight off the 2022 car. It instead waited for the clean sheet design for a greater saving overall rather than chase diminishing returns. Even though the FIA has scrapped the 2kg reduction to the 798kg minimum weight limit for this year, Alpine was already on course to hit the tighter target. That breathing space now gives mechanics the opportunity to run ballast and position it to optimise the chassis balance, a tactic that underscored Max Verstappen's second-half supremacy aboard the Red Bull RB18.

A proud Matt Harman, technical director at Alpine, explains: "We've given ourselves another 300 milliseconds of lap time from the weight we've taken off the car. Some people already have that because they're not overweight. That's a gain that we've taken. It was very difficult to do that. It took a lot of focused effort."

Matt Harman is ready to
pat his team on the back



ALPINE

“Mechanical” Ocon
approves of A523
build quality

TEE
motorsport
IMAGES



“The 2022 car kind of looked like a toy in comparison to what we have now. It’s a huge step again in 2023”

Traditionally, taking weight off the car was about taking a little bit off of everything. You can’t do that under a cost cap. You need to focus and pick the areas that are going to yield you the most, and that’s what we did. The engineering team at Enstone have done a fantastic job. When we weigh the car just before qualifying in Bahrain, I look forward to telling them all how well they’ve done.”

A considerable saving has come with the change of rear suspension, with a pull-rod system ditched in favour of push-rods. The team originally toyed with running this configuration for its ground-effects concept back in 2019 before changing tack. The new layout is said to have performed faultlessly on track so far. The benefits don’t stop with the scales, either. The new layout dramatically improves airflow and provides more room for manoeuvre when it comes to set-up changes. Combine that with the customisable ballast, and incumbent Esteban Ocon and new team-mate Pierre Gasly should be, once the handling is fine-tuned, quite content behind the wheel.

“The push-rod was quite a main advantage,” adds Harman. “It gives us quite a lot of nice aerodynamic features. But also, it’s freed up a little bit of space to have some more systems on the inboard to give us that mechanical balance adjustment that we need. There are also some cooling aspects in there that have been very useful at the rear of the car, and how we eject the mass flow out of the cooling areas and into the rear wing. The whole rear end of the car is, at the moment, still prime for development. There’s lots to be done in there.”

The confidence emanating from Alpine is clear and in stark contrast to the more reserved demeanour from key rival McLaren. Usually, it’s to be taken as a bad sign when teams spend some of their launch events talking up early upgrades, the suggestion being that their first crack at the car is too conservative. That’s the sentiment from Woking. But in Enstone, where the plan is also to

bolt on an immediate update, they’re relishing the opportunity to add even more performance. Harman has already confirmed that a sizeable development will be fitted to the A523 in time for the Bahrain season opener this weekend, plus further tweaks to correct some of the existing parts, although the latter is supposedly fully in line with internal expectations.

Driver feedback so far has been cautiously positive, too. Ocon reckoned the car had been well-behaved throughout his behind-closed-doors Silverstone shakedown and in Bahrain testing, allowing the team to follow all the normal procedures. While that doesn’t sound like an exhilarating conclusion, it runs in stark contrast to what was said after pre-season running 12 months ago. Alpine was rushing to meet deadlines last year, but this time the sentiment is that the team arrived at testing and claimed to be immediately “race ready”.

“It’s a good evolution compared to last year,” says Ocon. “I’m a very mechanical guy. I like to get close to the bodywork and close to the suspension side of things and have a look deeply into how parts are made. If I have to be honest, the 2022 car kind of looked like a toy in comparison to what we have now. The level of detail and how nice the parts are made, in terms of weight-saving, in terms of solutions in the cockpit and everything, it all looks like proper race car spec. How the bodywork goes together and how all the parts are made, it’s very nice. First, that’s good for reliability. Second, it means that the team took a step up again. It was a step from 2021 to 2022. And now it’s a huge step again in 2023.

“We’ll see if that translates to performance, but already it is a step. That’s what I can see.”

Testing lap times come with all the usual caveats, in so far as fuel loads and engine modes are unknown while varying tyre compounds and age, plus track evolution, ensure accurate comparisons are near impossible. But more can be read into how assured Alpine appears to be. While the more aloof corporate managers better associated with the road car arm repeatedly peddle a somewhat fanciful 100-race target for this Anglo-French operation to fight for championships, the race team is more pragmatic.

Despite the rules attempting to bunch the pack, Enstone’s aim is for Ocon and Gasly to be lonely out on track – not quite hanging onto the coat tails of Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes but well clear of the rest. Given the early signs that point to the A523 having taken a step forward relative to rival machines, plus the clear intent to set the standard in the development arms race, Alpine seems, and believes it is, well positioned to meet those measured targets. 🏁

McLaren, Alpha Tauri, Williams

The rookies of 2023

Three young men — one perhaps not quite so young — get to realise their dream of competing in Formula 1 this year. Hype is enveloping them already, each for different but compelling reasons. One carries F1's hopes of consolidating its US growth, another is a late starter who's already proved his worth at the top level, while another is so highly rated that there was an ugly fight over his services. Question is, can they all live up to that hype?

STUART CODLING

An Oscar-nominated performance

Not since Charles Leclerc blew into the F1 paddock in 2018, fresh from a winning streak in the feeder formulas, has a rookie driver generated quite such a collective fever. Even team bosses have been losing their heads in giddy excitement over Oscar Piastri's immense talent, to the extent that McLaren and Alpine went to the Contract Recognition Board last year in a well-publicised tussle to secure him.

With typical understatement, the Melbourne native describes this rancorous period as "the drama". Piastri had been part of Alpine's driver-development programme but overachieved, winning the F2 championship in 2021, a season earlier than the Anglo-French operation had anticipated. There was no seat for him last season and, when Alpine's bosses tried to arrive at a contractual fudge for this year, aiming to park him at Williams while tying in Fernando Alonso for one more season, the result was a meltdown.

Behind the scenes, Piastri and his manager, ex-Red Bull driver Mark Webber, had been fulminating about the lack of movement on the contract front and had quietly done a deal with McLaren. To be parked as a 'reserve driver' for a season was difficult enough for a young man bursting with career momentum, to be consigned to the back of the grid was unthinkable.

The move to McLaren was lubricated by the fact that Alpine had failed to proceed beyond 'heads of terms'. It's difficult to know which is the least edifying element of this saga for Alpine — failing to properly take care of such pressing business in the first place, or the salvo of sloping desks as sundry denizens of the C-suite tried to evade taking responsibility for the gaffe.

McLaren's approach to getting Piastri ready for F1 seems to have been more methodical so far. Testing restrictions have limited him to just one proper outing in a contemporary car, in the post-season Abu Dhabi young driver test. But he has driven McLaren's 2021 car at Paul Ricard and Barcelona to enable him to familiarise himself with the controls and get accustomed to cornering speeds.

"Obviously there'll be a bit of rust having not raced for a year," he says. "Putting a number on how many races it will take [to shake off the rust] is a hard task. In Bahrain, I'll have a good idea of where I'm at."

While he is keen to maintain that he's under no pressure to deliver immediate results, expectations for Piastri remain high. And with good reason. Like his manager, he is a steely competitor under that outward layer of laid-back bonhomie.

"Oscar is a man of few words but the right words," says team boss Andrea Stella. "That's become very apparent. He's focused and also demanding."

#81

OSCAR PIASTRİ

BORN	Melbourne, 6 April 2001
2021	F2 champion with Prema (6 wins)
2020	F3 champion with Prema (2 wins)
2019	Formula Renault Eurocup champion with R-ace GP (7 wins)
2018	8th in FR Eurocup with Arden
2017	2nd in British F4 with Arden (6 wins)



Weight of expectation is high for Piastri, de Vries and Sargeant



Attention Sargeant

Formula 1's commercial rights holder has grown borderline desperate to add an American driver to its paddock portfolio. Netflix's *Drive to Survive* show has helped F1 succeed where previous attempts to establish an audience in the US have failed, and the aspiration is that a home-grown star will add yet more momentum.

Whether Logan Sargeant is the man to make this happen is open to question. It's fair to say that the preferred US option of many of the paddock's movers 'n' shakers was Colton Herta but, since he failed to meet the superlicence criteria, it falls to Sargeant, who got it over the line with fourth in F2 last year.

Netflix will have to be typically economical with the *actualite* to construct its preferred underdog narrative around Sargeant, who hails from wealthy stock (although, since Logan's father and uncle once had 14 different lawsuits buzzing between one another, the Sargeant family soap opera could fuel a series by itself). Despite this, 'funding issues' in 2020 meant Sargeant was unable to progress to Formula 2 after finishing third behind Piastri and Theo Pourchaire in F3.

Having evaluated sportscars and IndyCar, he spent a year treading water with Charouz in F3 before an opportunity arose with the Williams young-driver programme; US-domiciled Dorilton capital, the owner of Williams, was understandably keen to get an American driver on the books. After a promising start to the 2022 F2 season with Carlin, building to two race wins, Sargeant's campaign then wilted slightly with five retirements.

Lack of seat time — he ran in four free practice sessions at GPs last year plus the Abu Dhabi test

before the three-day pre-season running in Bahrain — means Sargeant has had limited experience in contemporary ground-effects F1 machinery. He'll also be driving one of the slowest machines on the grid, even if Williams has successfully debugged its car. This would be no problem for Netflix if Sargeant brought a rock star persona to the table; however, he's very much of the Mick Schumacher school, personable enough but giving very little away.

No less an eminence than Red Bull team principal Christian Horner has adumbrated the challenge facing Sargeant and his chances of wowing the US. "The problem is that if you're finishing 14th or 15th it doesn't really turn people on," Horner told the *New York Post*. "If he was fighting at the front in a competitive car, then you'd see what happened with Fernando [Alonso] in Spain, or Checo [Sergio Perez] and the reaction in Mexico. Imagine if there was an American Max Verstappen."

#2 LOGAN SARGEANT

BORN	Fort Lauderdale, 31 December 2000
2022	4th in F2 with Carlin (2 wins)
2021	7th in F3 with Charouz (1 win)
2020	3rd in F3 with Prema (2 wins)
2019	19th in F3 with Carlin; 3rd in Macau GP with Carlin
2018	4th in Formula Renault Eurocup (3 wins); 5th FR NEC (2 wins), both with R-ace GP
2017	3rd in British F4 with Carlin (2 wins)
2016-17	2nd in UAE F4 with Motopark





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Quick Nyck gets his chance

Hendrik Johannes Nicasius de Vries – thankfully Nyck for short – arrives in a full-time F1 seat fashionably late at the age of 28. A racing contemporary of the likes of Daniil Kvyat, Pierre Gasly, Alex Albon and Carlos Sainz on the junior single-seater ladder, this one-time McLaren protege has proved to be a slow-burn talent.

By his own admission, he struggled to properly get to grips with the transition from karting to single-seaters owing to his diminutive frame; he then put too much pressure on himself to overcome the physical challenges. So, while his trophy cabinet includes Formula Renault 2.0, F2 and Formula E championships, he took rather too long (three seasons in F2 alone) getting there to generate much buzz about his prospects of making an impression in F1. McLaren released him at the end of 2018, which was rather unfortunate timing since he won the F2 championship the following year.

Even this didn't open any doors, leading de Vries to move sideways into Formula E, and the beginning of a relationship with Mercedes that ultimately enabled him to fulfil the F1 dream on which he'd almost given up. Having

impressed Merc during the 2020 Abu Dhabi young driver test, he was granted a simulator gig and further FP1 outings at grand prix weekends with Mercedes and Aston Martin. The wider F1 world remained unconvinced, though, and he lost out to Albon in the race to replace George Russell at Williams last season.

It was Albon's indisposition at the Italian GP last year that facilitated de Vries's big break: famously, he had completed his Aston Martin F1 duties and was enjoying coffee ahead of an engagement with Merc VIPs when he got the call-up to race. For once in his career, timing was on his side. Monza was a rarity among F1 circuits, one very much in the wheelhouse of the low-downforce FW44. De Vries skilfully piloted it to ninth place in his maiden F1 race outing and parlayed that into a full-time drive for AlphaTauri this season. Mercedes might have done the right thing in abiding by an agreement to let him go if it couldn't place him with a Merc-affiliated team, but it may come to rue being so honourable.

Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin has claimed – albeit in a potentially partisan Dutch-language book entitled *Max and Nyck* – that de Vries could even end up at Red Bull's senior team racing alongside Max Verstappen within a year. "We might regret letting him go," he said.

#21 NYCK DE VRIES

Single-seaters:

BORN	Uitwellingergera, 6 February 1995
2022	9th in Italian GP with Williams
2021-22	9th in Formula E with Mercedes (2 wins)
2020-21	FE champion with Mercedes (2 wins)
2019-20	11th in FE with Mercedes
2019	F2 champion with ART (4 wins)
2018	4th in F2 with Prema (3 wins)
2017	7th in F2 with Rapax/Racing Engineering (1 win)
2016	6th in GP3 with ART (2 wins)
2015	3rd in Formula Renault 3.5 with DAMS (1 win)
2014	FEurocup champion (5 wins) and FRALPS champion (9 wins), both with Koiranen GP
2013	5th in FEurocup with Koiranen (2 wins)
2012	5th in FEurocup with R-ace GP



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F1 2023 season preview

Team by team

*Autosport's Formula 1 testing team provides your guide
to the 2023 season's runners and riders*

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Red Bull

CAR RED BULL RB19 ENGINE RED BULL RBPTH001 (HONDA)



STARTS 347 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2005 | WINS 92 | POLES 81 | FASTEST LAPS 84 | 2022 1ST

The pre-season favourite, after dominating last year. In 2022, Red Bull made a very strong start to Formula 1's new ground-effects era, and the advantages it accrued should carry over amid the new campaign's rule tweaks.

Those tweaks were aimed at eliminating porpoising, something the Red Bull package barely struggled with last year. Changes to its nose, front wing and airbox inlets, plus heavily revised floor edge details and tighter sidepod bodywork, are refinements to a package that creates a very stable aerodynamic platform the rest couldn't match last season, and indeed led to many teams adopting Red Bull ideas for 2023.

In testing in Bahrain, the RB19 appeared to be the class of the field, looking strong in both pure pace efforts and high-fuel runs. The car looked to be a touch above nearest rival Ferrari in the quicker corners but

was headed in straightline speed. This was a key Red Bull strength in 2022, where its aero-efficient design meant it was very slippery on the straights. This is again boosted by a potent Honda engine (badged as Honda RBPT), so the RB19 should be there or thereabouts with Ferrari into the braking zones too.

Christian Horner leads the squad for a 19th season, the first since the loss of Red Bull co-founder Dietrich Mateschitz. The team's star remains Max Verstappen, paired with Sergio Perez for a third straight year. Red Bull insists it has produced in the RB19 a package that suits both the understeer-hating double world champion and his team-mate.

The car starts at the weight limit this time, with the only questions really concerning its development potential following Red Bull's 2021 cost-cap penalty, plus the team-orders hangover from Brazil 2022.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



**#1
MAX
VERSTAPPEN**



**#11
SERGIO
PEREZ**

1ST	2022 POSITION	3RD
25	AGE	33
163	STARTS	235
AUSTRALIA 2015	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2011
35 WINS	BEST FINISH	4 WINS
20 POLES	BEST GRID POS	1 POLE
21	FASTEST LAPS	9

Max Verstappen

Verstappen is close to the most complete driver you'd think of if you were designing one in a laboratory. He's super-fast, fearless, ruthless and clever – with enough spare capacity to joke around *if* he likes you. He's one of the best overtakers on the grid, but can get involved in incidents – although these days only seemingly with Lewis Hamilton. He's brash with Red Bull on the radio, but his team doesn't care. Don't bet against a third F1 crown for the Dutchman.

Sergio Perez

Hired this time two years ago to get closer to Verstappen than previous team-mates could. Perez played a part in his colleague's two titles and the 2022 constructors' crown. He's capable of taking wins and poles, but typically only if Verstappen isn't having a smooth time. He can't handle Red Bull's oversteering tendencies as well as his team-mate and this was badly exposed last summer. But he's good enough if Red Bull maintains its dominance.



Ferrari

CAR FERRARI SF-23 ENGINE FERRARI 066/10



STARTS 1052 | FIRST GP MONACO 1950 | WINS 242 | POLES 242 | FASTEST LAPS 259 | 2022 2ND

So much promise turned into disaster last year, and Ferrari is hoping to right its many 2022 wrongs with its SF-23 challenger and various team changes for the new campaign.

Testing form indicated that Ferrari should again be Red Bull's biggest threat. It has a better overall driver line-up in Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz, and they're now managed by new team principal Fred Vasseur, who takes over from the ousted Mattia Binotto. He's quickly made alterations to the team's strategy operation, which went so awry so often in 2022. The Frenchman will need time to enact real change, not that this lessens the pressure to succeed at Italy's in-effect national team, F1's most-famous squad.

Ferrari has succeeded in making its SF-23 less draggy than its predecessor. It features revised suspension and a front-wing concept first seen, but

never raced, on the 2022 Mercedes. Updates in the evolution package include new airbox horns, greater sidepod sculpting and large cooling gills, with a shorter nose. A side-cockpit 'S-duct', aimed at reducing front-end turbulence while boosting downforce at the rear, is nifty.

The move to shed drag has, it seems, cost Ferrari some corner speed compared to Red Bull, while the red squad enters the campaign knowing it has work to do to nail a set-up sweet spot. Ferrari also wants its new car to be more competitive over a greater range of tracks than the F1-75 of 2022 was.

Ferrari has worked hard to make its engine more reliable (and powerful), which, if it works and helps create another championship challenge, should soothe any worries about Leclerc's beyond-2024 contract talks going sour. But watch out for that being a story of the season anyway.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



#16
**CHARLES
LECLERC**



#55
**CARLOS
SAINZ**

2ND	2022 POSITION	5TH
25	AGE	28
102	STARTS	162
AUSTRALIA 2018	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2015
5 WINS	BEST FINISH	1 WIN
18 POLES	BEST GRID POS	3 POLES
7	FASTEST LAPS	3

Charles Leclerc

Leclerc was frustrated to see his first F1 title challenge implode last year, given he showed brilliantly in battle against Max Verstappen during their early-season exchanges and has so much speed that he scooped the most poles, despite Red Bull's dominant package. That factor isn't likely to change, but Leclerc needs to prove he's better at consistent tyre management and eradicate the small errors that can lead to crashes.

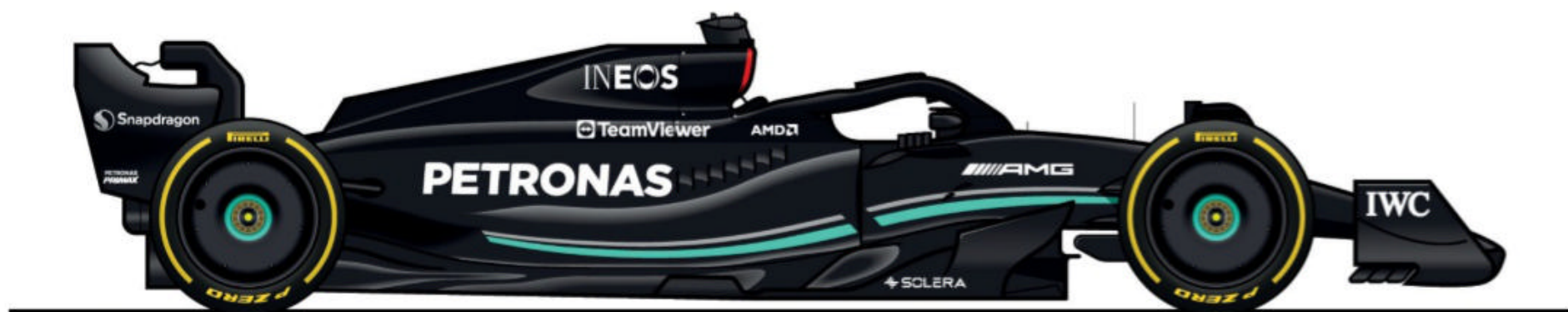
Carlos Sainz

Sainz has impressed Ferrari for two years now but lost his way against Charles Leclerc in 2022, when he took longer to cope with the loose-rear tendencies of the new ground-effects machines. He got there, and took poles along with a maiden F1 win at Silverstone, but is aiming to be at his team-mate's level from the off this year. Charming, clever and erudite, no wonder the Spaniard is a popular paddock figure.



Mercedes

CAR MERCEDES W14 ENGINE MERCEDES M14



STARTS 271 | FIRST GP FRANCE 1954 | WINS 125 | POLES 136 | FASTEST LAPS 100 | 2022 3RD

After being bullish about its chances with F1's first new ground-effects cars, Mercedes heads into 2023 with a rather humbler approach.

One of the key reasons for this tone change is because Mercedes has persisted with the 'zeropod' and large, exposed floor area first seen on the W13 and adopted by no other squad. The team has spent the winter engineering out the porpoising and ride-stiffness issues baked into the previous car, while also believing it would be worse off starting afresh with a Red Bull-inspired design. Mercedes continues to remind F1 fans that the true differentiators with the new generation of cars are the underfloor venturi tunnels and aero surfaces, with the sidepods of secondary importance. Nevertheless, the team is already hinting that it will abandon the zeropod approach soon if it can't make big progress quickly.

The W14 is yet another evolution package, with changes including reworked front and rear suspensions, an altered front wing and slightly reshaped nose. Its zeropods are wider around the middle than the W13's, while the car features tunnelled bodywork that opens rearwards.

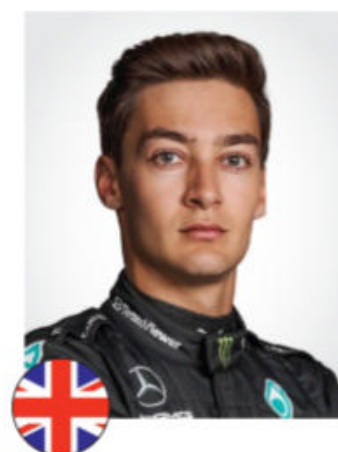
The car appeared to be riding much more smoothly in testing, while also having the more predictable corner entry that Lewis Hamilton and George Russell desired. But handling wasn't perfect and it appeared as if the W14 can lead Mercedes the wrong way on set-up. Plus, it had a hydraulic pump failure shake the reliability prowess it wanted to retain from 2022.

Mercedes returns to a black livery to save weight, with the team's united culture set to be a key strength again in the second year of the Hamilton-Russell line-up. How long that lasts depends on the former's contract talks with team boss Toto Wolff.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



#44
LEWIS HAMILTON



#63
GEORGE RUSSELL

6TH	2022 POSITION	4TH
38	AGE	25
310	STARTS	82
AUSTRALIA 2007	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2019
103 WINS	BEST FINISH	1 WIN
103 POLES	BEST GRID POS	1 POLE
61	FASTEST LAPS	5

Lewis Hamilton

Hamilton is still searching for a record-setting eighth F1 world title and comes into 2023 after an unusual experience – knowing he scored no poles or wins last year, for the first time in his F1 career. But he came close on occasion despite Mercedes' many car dramas, proving that he's still got it to succeed at the top level. He's the only driver at Max Verstappen's level, and seemingly won't give ground if the pair engage in battle again. Still a class act.

George Russell

Now a grand prix race winner after his first season racing for the team where he was long a junior prospect, Russell is establishing himself as a paddock leader. He's a Grand Prix Drivers' Association director and always fronts up to the big discussion topics thrashing around the 'Piranha Club'. He knows he needs to get better at tyre management – he's seen what Hamilton can do on that front – plus eliminate a tendency to push too hard on occasion.



Alpine

CAR ALPINE A523 ENGINE RENAULT E-TECH RE23



STARTS 444 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1977 (AS RENAULT) | WINS 36 | POLES 51 | FASTEST LAPS 33 | 2022 4TH

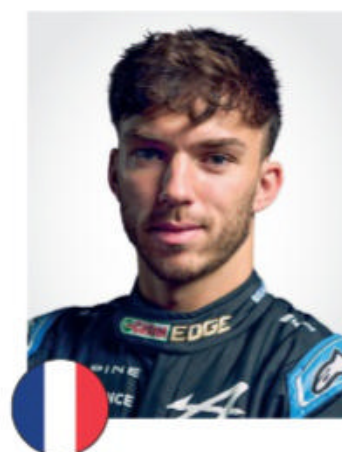
There was plenty of hype surrounding Alpine at its glitzy London nightclub car launch. The big wigs were buoyant about their latest creation. That's entirely in keeping with an extensive technical redesign that includes a new cooling package and heavily reworked rear suspension. But the Anglo-French squad was far more muted during testing in Bahrain.

Forget any late low-fuel glory runs on the final day to climb the timing screens. New signing Pierre Gasly ran to 17th, while the incumbent Esteban Ocon was slowest of all. Since Alpine was significantly stymied by unreliability last term, and in view of its major revisions that need troubleshooting, it was also surprising that it ran for just 353 laps across the three days. That was ahead of only McLaren, which endured a torrid time blighted by poor handling and fouling front wheel covers.

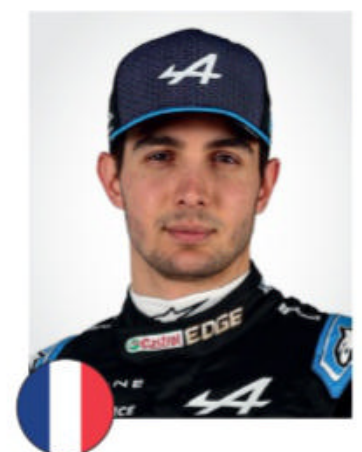
But now is not the time for panic stations, or so we're told. Alpine insiders say the run plan was solely about understanding each and every set-up tweak rather than completing qualifying simulations and several targeted race stints. Certainly, neither of the drivers or top brass intimated that anything was amiss with their bid to close the gap to Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes while leaving the rest of the midfield behind. Although Aston Martin might have something to say about that...

When the lesser-spotted A523 did take to the track, it looked neat enough aside from a few botched braking zones for Ocon. But now there's no Fernando Alonso behind the wheel. Divisive and hard to manage he may be, but this year's revised all-French driver pairing needs to prove it can replicate his odds-defying racecraft to keep the team punching upwards.

MATT KEW



#10
PIERRE GASLY



#31
ESTEBAN OCON

14TH	2022 POSITION	8TH
27	AGE	26
108	STARTS	111
MALAYSIA 2017	FIRST GP	BELGIUM 2016
1 WIN	BEST FINISH	1 WIN
2ND	BEST GRID POS	3RD
3	FASTEST LAPS	0

Pierre Gasly

Race winner Gasly has escaped the Red Bull driver holding pattern after amicably exiting his contract a year early. With little else to prove at AlphaTauri, an Alpine stint will likely define how his F1 career is judged. Can he convincingly vanquish old karting foe Esteban Ocon to argue that he was unfortunate to be overlooked by the big teams, or will he settle down as a decent, but ultimately midpack, contender?

Esteban Ocon

Since regaining a full-time race seat in 2020, Ocon has been the young understudy at Team Enstone. Now that Fernando Alonso has jumped ship – and having had three years to endear himself to the mechanics – he must prove that he can be an undisputed team leader. Not falling out with a third stablemate would be a good place to start, although a frosty past with Pierre Gasly should not be forgotten.



McLaren

CAR **McLAREN MCL60** ENGINE **MERCEDES M14**



STARTS 924 | FIRST GP MONACO 1966 | WINS 183 | POLES 156 | FASTEST LAPS 161 | 2022 5TH

The 2022 season was a mixed bag for McLaren. After discovering crippling brake-duct issues in pre-season, the Woking squad started the campaign on the back foot. It eventually recovered, and Lando Norris continued to shine to haul McLaren back into contention for fourth, the place it occupied in 2021.

On the other side of the garage Daniel Ricciardo's struggles persisted. His lack of points and Alpine's superior pace eventually made McLaren regress from fourth to fifth behind 'Team Enstone'. During the summer it also made McLaren buy the Australian out of his hefty 2023 contract and snatch away F2 champ Oscar Piastri from Alpine in one of 2022's biggest silly season storylines.

McLaren has already admitted that it will struggle to do much better until its new wind tunnel and other key facility upgrades come online this

summer, bringing its infrastructure at the McLaren Technology Centre up to par with the competition.

Meanwhile, there is concern that 2023 will become another lost year. In the hands of both Norris and exciting rookie Piastri, McLaren's new MCL60 looked like a handful in Bahrain testing, and even before a wheel was turned the team realised that its aerodynamic efficiency is nowhere near its initial targets. New team boss Andrea Stella, who replaces the departed Andreas Seidl, conceded that McLaren is in for another tough start to the season. Until an upgrade package planned for the Azerbaijan GP in April arrives, it remains to be seen whether Norris and Piastri will even contend for points in the draggy McLaren. And such is the progress made by midfield rivals Aston Martin, Haas and Alfa Romeo, it is not inconceivable that we could see the team start 2023 near the back.

FILIP CLEEREN



#4
LANDO NORRIS



#81
OSCAR PIASTR

7TH	2022 POSITION	ALPINE RESERVE
23	AGE	21
82	STARTS	0
AUSTRALIA 2019	FIRST GP	N/A
2ND	BEST FINISH	N/A
1 POLE	BEST GRID POS	N/A
5	FASTEST LAPS	N/A

Lando Norris

In his fourth F1 season Norris continued to perform at the level that is now expected from him. He raked in 13 top-seven finishes, including the only podium for a team outside the top three. Norris has become crucial to McLaren, but he's also highly rated by rival teams. If McLaren again fails to make progress it remains to be seen if Norris's patience will last. After all, his mates Carlos Sainz and George Russell are already F1 winners...

Oscar Piastri

Such is the paddock's admiration for 2021 F2 champion Piastri, that McLaren and Alpine became involved in a legal tug of war over his services before he had even turned an F1 wheel in anger. His calmness, determination and demanding nature are unlike that of most rookies. It will be fascinating to see what the Australian is truly made of, but he might not have the car to show it yet in 2023.



Alfa Romeo

CAR ALFA ROMEO C43 ENGINE FERRARI 066/10



STARTS 192 | FIRST GP BRITAIN 1950 | WINS 10 | POLES 12 | FASTEST LAPS 15 | 2022 6TH

What a difference a year makes for Alfa Romeo. During last year's first winter test at Barcelona, the Sauber-run team was plagued by various reliability issues that limited its running. Those gremlins persisted throughout the season as drivers Valtteri Bottas and Zhou Guanyu frequently suffered from a spate of problems that held the team back, compounded by engine issues from supplier Ferrari that also hit the works squad and fellow customer Haas.

Despite losing time to a systems error and another suspected engine problem, the drivers amassed 402 laps over three days in Bahrain last week. It is not yet clear if the Ferrari power unit will again become cause for concern but, if testing is anything to go by, then the Hinwil's team's new C43 seems to be well-born.

Alfa Romeo also appears to have found a solution to its 2022 weakness

in high-speed corners. On a good day, last year's C42 proved capable of mixing it up with Alpine and McLaren, but its inherent high-speed instability persisted throughout the campaign and prevented Alfa from mounting a sustained challenge.

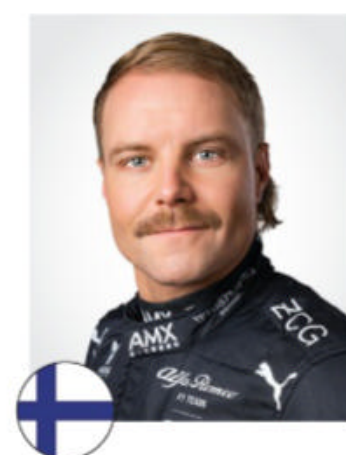
Both drivers have described the handling of their new C43 in glowing terms, with Bottas saying that Alfa is in a much better position than it was last year. With the Finn taking third on the overall charts and Zhou topping day two, there are also positive noises about the car's pace as it aims to improve on last year's sixth place in the championship.

In what is shaping up to be an extremely competitive midfield, a vastly experienced Bottas and a more confident Zhou seem to have a good platform to build on. If Alfa Romeo can address its third 2022 weakness – its slower development pace – then it has a fighting chance to step up.

FILIP CLEEREN



#24
ZHOU GUANYU



#77
VALTTERI BOTTAS

18TH	2022 POSITION	10TH
23	AGE	33
22	STARTS	200
BAHRAIN 2022	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2013
8TH	BEST FINISH	10 WINS
9TH	BEST GRID POS	20 POLES
1	FASTEST LAPS	19

Zhou Guanyu

Zhou impressed at times during his 2022 debut year, but Alfa Romeo's unstable car and reliability issues made adapting to life in F1 harder than had been hoped for the Chinese rookie. He scored just six points to Bottas's 49, but the benefit of experience and a much smoother Bahrain test seem to have given Zhou more confidence ahead of his sophomore campaign. Zhou is well liked by the team, and it hopes 2023 is the year he will kick on.

Valtteri Bottas

As a winner of 10 grands prix, Bottas never seemed happier in F1 than in 2022, a season in which his best result was a single fifth place. Freed from the pressure of battling Lewis Hamilton on one-year Mercedes contracts, Bottas thrived as Alfa Romeo provided him with a stable environment. If the team's 2023 car is the step forward that it promises to be, expect the experienced Finn – who also has proven one-lap pace – to shine.



Aston Martin

CAR ASTON MARTIN AMR23 ENGINE MERCEDES M14



STARTS 49 | FIRST GP NETHERLANDS 1959 | WINS 0 | POLES 0 | FASTEST LAPS 0 | 2022 7TH

Here lies the biggest climber in 2023. Well, that’s according to envious midfield rivals who have watched Aston Martin excel during testing. The Silverstone squad tied with Alfa Romeo on 55 points last year although it ultimately fell to seventh in the final standings for the lack of a top-five race result. But the AMR23 finally appears to be a machine that can validate team owner Lawrence Stroll’s aggressive and expensive hiring policy in this bid to lift the team towards the very top of the so-called ‘Class B’ behind Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes.

The 2022 challenger that failed to score a point until the European leg of the calendar was essentially a poor concept that was developed badly. The pivotal moment was Dan Fallows completing his Red Bull gardening leave to sign on as the aerodynamics chief to radically overhaul the design

and ensure a stream of upgrades that were timely and effective.

His latest creation appears to only enhance that good trend. Fernando Alonso was surely smiling under his helmet in testing given the sheer violence with which he turned into corners and for how eager he was to pick up the throttle just past the apex.

In public, Aston bosses are keeping it coy. But the internal atmosphere is one of cautious excitement. Alonso running second only to Max Verstappen on the first day in Bahrain, and the team’s eventual best time representing a 2.371-second improvement over its testing pace at the venue last year (the second biggest gainer behind Williams), underscore that optimism. If the car really is fast, the focus must turn to rectifying the tyre and qualifying strategy missteps that too often left the drivers with it all to do on Sundays last season.

MATT KEW



#14
FERNANDO ALONSO

9TH	2022 POSITION	15TH
41	AGE	24
355	STARTS	122
AUSTRALIA 2001	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2017
32 WINS	BEST FINISH	3RD
22 POLES	BEST GRID POS	1 POLE
23	FASTEST LAPS	0



#18
LANCE STROLL



Fernando Alonso

The double champion has often been accused of poor timing in the past, but now appears to be joining Aston Martin just as it comes on song after a deeply impressive Bahrain test. Alonso will be quick and continue to masterfully execute races after excelling last season. But his tendency to create internal divisions will likely go down even less well than usual should he put either of the Strolls’ noses out of joint. Either way, watch this space.

Lance Stroll

He missed testing due to a wrist injury sustained while cycling and it’s fanciful that Stroll recovers in time for this weekend’s Bahrain GP, which will offer FIA F2 champion Felipe Drugovich an unlikely F1 debut. When the Canadian does return, he won’t be wholly familiar with the rapid AMR23 and therefore risks being rolled over by new team-mate Alonso, who won’t be as amiable and sharing as former partner Sebastian Vettel.

Haas

CAR HAAS VF-23 ENGINE FERRARI 066/10



STARTS 144 | FIRST GP AUSTRALIA 2016 | WINS 0 | POLES 1 | FASTEST LAPS 2 | 2022 8TH

Testing could hardly have gone smoother for Haas. It couldn't quite eliminate a niggling throttle issue, but that's very far from the disaster endured 12 months ago. Back then, the team was scrambling to have a car built in time, had its freight to Bahrain delayed, and then finally turned up without a title sponsor after sacking Russian racer Nikita Mazepin.

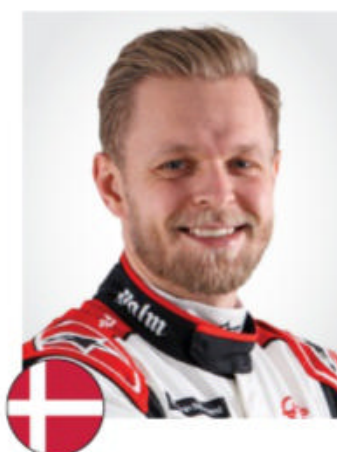
While this season's driver duo of Kevin Magnussen and Nico Hulkenberg may seem a cautiously safe pair of pilots, it's easy to appreciate why Haas might desire a quieter life for one year at least. Setting global politics aside, turning to Hulkenberg can offer a consistency that an occasionally rapid Mick Schumacher struggled too often to find in 2022. And if the older German can avoid the couple of seven-figure car-snapping smashes that ravaged the team's budget last year, then Haas

should be able to bring more updates to the car. That will be key in helping it to avoid the drop-off that consigned it to eighth in the standings. Further savings include halving the size of the pitwall 'prat perch'.

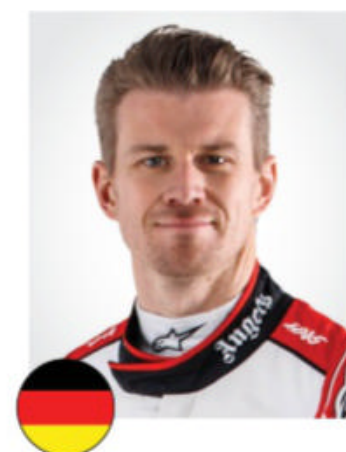
Team boss Gunther Steiner believes there is no F1 midfield anymore, and says that everyone behind the big three teams are much of a muchness. But whereas Alpine and Aston Martin have been bold with their new cars, Haas has certainly favoured cautious evolution with the tweaks to the VF-23. Therefore, it might struggle to dramatically shoot up the pecking order.

The car is also at the mercy of the customer Ferrari powertrain, but Maranello has made promises that reliability has improved and a little extra power found. Completing the fourth-highest number of laps in Bahrain (compared to the ninth-most last season) suggests that's true.

MATT KEW



#20
**KEVIN
MAGNUSSEN**



#27
**NICO
HULKENBERG**

13TH	2022 POSITION	22ND
30	AGE	35
141	STARTS	181
AUSTRALIA 2014	FIRST GP	BAHRAIN 2010
2ND	BEST FINISH	4TH
1 POLE	BEST GRID POS	1 POLE
2	FASTEST LAPS	2

Kevin Magnussen

Recalled by Gunther Steiner on the eve of the 2022 campaign, Magnussen hogged the Haas headlines with seven points finishes in 2022. That included a brilliant fifth place in the Bahrain opener and a sensational pole in Brazil. There was plenty of pace inconsistency and involvement in collisions, however. Having repaired his relationship with team-mate Nico Hulkenberg, the Dane forms one half of a sensible driver duo.

Nico Hulkenberg

The German makes his full-time return after three seasons on the sidelines. While he counts four substitute appearances in that gap, there will be rust to shake off, particularly when it comes to wheel-to-wheel racecraft. Hulkenberg's brief is to deliver consistency, bank the occasional point and not destroy the Haas upgrade budget by smashing the car. That alone will be an improvement over the dropped Mick Schumacher.



AlphaTauri

CAR ALPHATAURI AT04 ENGINE RED BULL RBPTH001 (HONDA)



STARTS 329 | FIRST GP BAHRAIN 2006 (AS TORO ROSSO) | WINS 2 | POLES 1 | FASTEST LAPS 2 | 2022 9TH

The future of AlphaTauri was the subject of uncertainty on the final day of testing. A story emerged that a Red Bull management structure rejig following the death of company co-founder Dietrich Mateschitz is preparing to get rid in the short to medium term. But other well-connected sources say that planning permission is being sought to expand the existing Faenza factory.

Away from those distractions, this is a team that has no excuse not to do better than its abject run to ninth in the constructors' table last season.

The now-obsolete AT03 was a victim of AlphaTauri switching to use the larger-scale Red Bull wind tunnel, which brought calibration issues and resulted in an underbaked car. Now, having enjoyed a year to adapt while still relying on the same first-rate intel and resources that shaped the double title-winning RB18 and the

test-topping RB19, there is nowhere to hide. Yet its running in Bahrain was more humdrum than stunning.

The stocky-looking AT04 racked up the highest number of laps at 456, led by acclimatising newcomer Nyck de Vries, who Helmut Marko lured away from the Mercedes-powered stable following his sterling run to ninth in the 2022 Italian Grand Prix. Incumbent Yuki Tsunoda, meanwhile, set the sixth-fastest time on day three to pip Haas driver Kevin Magnussen.

Positives have been drawn from the strong reliability, race simulations going largely to plan and the team bouncing back to end the test on a high. After a few earlier set-up tweaks had yielded unexpectedly unpredictable handling characteristics, the car was responding far better on the final day. Ahead of the season-opener, that leaves AlphaTauri to chase its target of arresting its decline and rejoining F1's midfield.

MATT KEW



#21
**NYCK
DE VRIES**



#22
**YUKI
TSUNODA**

21ST	2022 POSITION	17TH
28	AGE	22
1	STARTS	42
ITALY 2022	FIRST GP	BAHRAIN 2021
9TH	BEST FINISH	4TH
8TH	BEST GRID POS	7TH
0	FASTEST LAPS	0

Nyck de Vries

De Vries is demanding and extremely self-assured. He will therefore constantly be on to AlphaTauri to unlock performance as he grasps his belated F1 chance. Now 28, the FIA F2 and Formula E champion is already perceived to be the team leader. The wider expectation is for him to pick up from a stellar cameo at Monza and perhaps even use this opportunity as a springboard to become Max Verstappen's next team-mate.

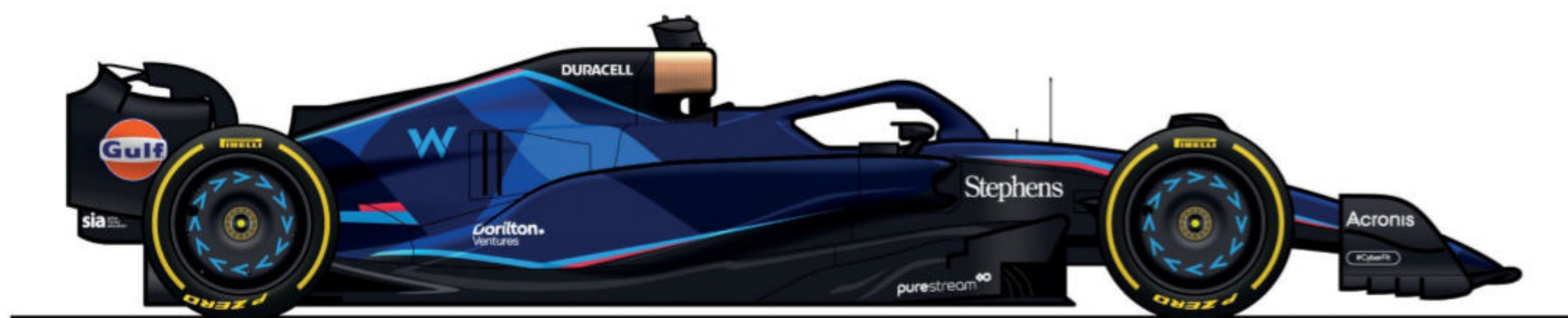
Yuki Tsunoda

A new personal trainer should help physically and a psychologist should help mentally. But Tsunoda still has much to improve ahead of his third F1 campaign. He's rapid on occasion but prone to clumsy errors and inconsistency. That newcomer team-mate Nyck de Vries is already touted as the AlphaTauri number one speaks volumes. Hopefully the performance gains of the AT04 can help him bolster his standing.



Williams

CAR WILLIAMS FW45 ENGINE MERCEDES M14



STARTS 788 | FIRST GP SPAIN 1977 | WINS 114 | POLES 128 | FASTEST LAPS 133 | 2022 10TH

If 2022 was a season of change for Williams, then 2023 will not be any different. Team principal Jost Capito and his trusted technical director FX Demaison have both come and gone as owner Dorilton Capital continues the team's complete rebuild. Williams is now finally operating at the budget cap, but years of underinvestment won't be erased overnight and it still lags behind the rest of the grid in several crucial areas, resulting in a last-place finish in 2022.

Dorilton headhunted Mercedes' highly regarded strategy director James Vowles as its new team principal but, with key Williams positions such as a new technical director and head of aerodynamics yet to be filled since becoming vacant in December, Vowles will have to move decisively to reinforce the team's structure and prevent it from losing even more time.

Williams's performance and reliability at the Bahrain test seem to have encouraged the troops at Grove. The FW45 ran without too many issues and, according to Alex Albon, has left the team "definitely in a better place" than this time last year. Williams ran 439 laps over three days, second only to AlphaTauri. An impressive 154 were completed in one day by rookie Logan Sargeant, the American F2 contender who has come in to replace Nicholas Latifi.

Most of Williams's midfield rivals have also made progress, so whether the FW45 will be enough of a leap forward to get away from the bottom of the championship remains to be seen. But rather than just focusing on where it ends up in 2023, it will be more important for Williams to find stability and put the foundations in place for long-term progress. If the team is ever to be restored to its former glory, Vowles has work to do.

FILIP CLEEREN



**#2
LOGAN
SARGEANT**



**#23
ALEXANDER
ALBON**

4TH IN F2	2022 POSITION	19TH
22	AGE	26
0	STARTS	59
N/A	FIRST GP	AUSTRALIA 2019
N/A	BEST FINISH	3RD
N/A	BEST GRID POS	4TH
N/A	FASTEST LAPS	0

Logan Sargeant

After Williams missed out on loaning Oscar Piastri from Alpine, 2022 F2 frontrunner Sargeant was fast-tracked into F1 for 2023. The 22-year-old American showed promise in F2 and would have finished higher than fourth if it hadn't been for reliability issues. At Williams, Sargeant enters F1 without too much pressure, and in Albon he has the right team-mate to help him settle. He'll also have three home races!

Alexander Albon

After a year on the sidelines following a bruising spell alongside Max Verstappen at Red Bull, Albon has grabbed his second chance with both hands. Albon's speed has often been highly impressive, but partnered with rookie team-mate Logan Sargeant the soft-spoken Anglo-Thai is now officially the team's lead driver too. He will have to shoulder the brunt of the responsibility in steering car development in the right direction.





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3 AUSTRALIAN GP

Melbourne
2 April
UK start time: 0600

4 AZERBAIJAN GP

Baku
30 April
UK start time: 1200

5 MIAMI GP

Miami
7 May
UK start time: 2030

6 EMILIA ROMAGNA GP

Imola
21 May
UK start time: 1400

7 MONACO GP

Monte Carlo
28 May
UK start time: 1400

8 SPANISH GP

Barcelona
4 June
UK start time: 1400

9 CANADIAN GP

Montreal
18 June
UK start time: 1900

10 AUSTRIAN GP

Red Bull Ring
2 July
UK start time: 1400

11 BRITISH GP

Silverstone
9 July
UK start time: 1500

12 HUNGARIAN GP

Hungaroring
23 July
UK start time: 1400

13 BELGIAN GP

Spa
30 July
UK start time: 1400

14 DUTCH GP

Zandvoort
27 August
UK start time: 1400

15 ITALIAN GP

Monza
3 September
UK start time: 1400

16 SINGAPORE GP

Marina Bay
17 September
UK start time: 1300

17 JAPANESE GP

Suzuka
24 September
UK start time: 0600

18 QATAR GP

Losail
8 October
UK start time: 1500

19 UNITED STATES GP

Austin
22 October
UK start time: 2000

20 MEXICAN GP

Mexico City
29 October
UK start time: 2000

21 SAO PAULO GP

Interlagos
5 November
UK start time: 1700

22 LAS VEGAS GP

Las Vegas
18 November
UK start time: 0600 (Sun)

23 ABU DHABI GP

Yas Marina
26 November
UK start time: 1300

GARTH MILAN / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

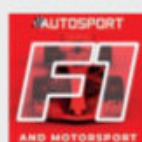


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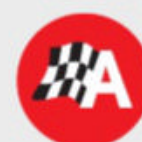
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PREVIEW F2/F3

Two Brits with an Italian job

With Ollie Bearman in Formula 2 and Zak O'Sullivan in F3, Prema Racing has two of the UK's most exciting talents on its books this season. But can they blow the opposition's doors off?

MEGAN WHITE





Bearman and O'Sullivan were F3 rivals last year. Now the former steps up

Like O'Sullivan and Ollie Bearman had very different rookie Formula 3 seasons in 2022.

The British pair both entered their maiden campaigns as reigning champions – O'Sullivan of GB3 and Bearman of both Italian and German F4. And while O'Sullivan stayed with Carlin for his step up, Bearman, as a new recruit to the Ferrari Driver Academy, headed straight for the top with junior series powerhouse Prema.

Look behind the differing results, and it's clear both put in seriously impressive seasons. O'Sullivan produced Farnham-based Carlin's best drivers' standings result – 11th – of the modern F3 era; Bearman clinched third in the points after a chaotic, controversial season finale at Monza he had entered as a title contender.

This year, the duo both line up at Prema Racing, with O'Sullivan joining the Italian squad for a second shot at F3 and Bearman graduating to Formula 2. Both championships kick off in Bahrain this weekend.

Williams Academy driver O'Sullivan will be one of the most watched drivers in F3 this year, and shoulders high expectations after stepping up to such a prestigious seat. For all Carlin's massive success in the previous iteration of F3, it has struggled in the category since it was revamped for 2019. Even so, he managed to clinch two podiums in his rookie season. The 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year had expected a "tricky





“A year under my belt helps with experience of the Pirelli tyre, which is a tricky beast. It will put me in good stead”

year” in 2022 given the team’s struggles, but said he “still learned a lot” despite its under-performance. The 18-year-old believes the team did improve throughout the season, but not as much as it had hoped, and he was unable to replicate his GB3 success with the team from 2021.

“It was my first year not really fighting for a championship, so a bit of a different focus point which took a while to get used to,” he relates. “I think it was a good year, I learned a lot, but obviously, not the results we probably wanted.” This year, though, will be different, with his move to a top team seen as a “natural step up”.

O’Sullivan’s experience could mean that he’s viewed as the natural leader alongside Ferrari protege Dino Beganovic and Mercedes junior Paul Aron, who graduate from the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine in which they finished first and third respectively last year. Prema is bidding to recapture the drivers’ title after missing out to ART Grand Prix’s Victor Martins in 2022. Bearman was its highest-placed pilot as it reclaimed the teams’ championship from Trident for its third win in four years.

O’Sullivan says the trio are already “working together trying to improve as much as we can as a team,” with Beganovic and Aron accustomed to working together after being team-mates in FRECA for the past two years, while O’Sullivan and Aron both drove for the Ricky Flynn Motorsport karting team in 2018.

Key to O’Sullivan’s campaign will be the race management skills he learned last season. “The Pirelli tyre is always quite a tricky beast to manage in the race,” he reckons. “Of course, a year under my belt helps with a bit of experience in that aspect. I think in general as well, maximising points in the sprint or feature race depending on how qualifying goes is quite critical. So yeah, I think a year of that for sure will put me in good stead.”

The most important lesson he learned in his rookie season, he said, was patience. “Obviously my first two years in single-seaters had been relatively successful [before his GB3 title, he was British F4 runner-up in 2020], and quite early on I was always on the >>



F3 entry list

NO	DRIVER	TEAM
1	Paul Aron (EST)	Prema Racing
2	Dino Beganovic (SWE)	Prema Racing
3	Zak O’Sullivan (GBR)	Prema Racing
4	Leonardo Fornaroli (ITA)	Trident
5	Gabriel Bortoleto (BRA)	Trident
6	Oliver Goethe (DEU)	Trident
7	Kaylen Frederick (USA)	ART Grand Prix
8	Gregoire Saucy (CHE)	ART Grand Prix
9	Nikola Tsolov (BGR)	ART Grand Prix
10	Franco Colapinto (ARG)	MP Motorsport
11	Mari Boya (ESP)	MP Motorsport
12	Jonny Edgar (GBR)	MP Motorsport
14	Sebastian Montoya (COL)	Hitech Grand Prix
15	Gabriele Mini (ITA)	Hitech Grand Prix
16	TBC	Hitech Grand Prix
17	Caio Collet (BRA)	Van Amersfoort Racing
18	Rafael Villagomez (MEX)	Van Amersfoort Racing
19	Tommy Smith (AUS)	Van Amersfoort Racing
20	Ollie Gray (GBR)	Rodin Carlin
21	Hunter Yeany (USA)	Rodin Carlin
22	Ido Cohen (ISR)	Rodin Carlin
23	Pepe Marti (ESP)	Campos Racing
24	Christian Mansell (AUS)	Campos Racing
25	Hugh Barter (AUS)	Campos Racing
26	Nikita Bedrin (RUS)	Jenzer Motorsport
27	Taylor Barnard (GBR)	Jenzer Motorsport
28	Alex Garcia (MEX)	Jenzer Motorsport
29	Sophia Florsch (DEU)	PHM Racing by Charouz
30	Roberto Faria (BRA)	PHM Racing by Charouz
31	Piotr Wisnicki (POL)	PHM Racing by Charouz

F3 calendar

RD	VENUE	DATE
1	Sakhir (BHR)	4-5 March
2	Melbourne (AUS)	1-2 April
3	Imola (ITA)	20-21 May
4	Monte Carlo (MCO)	27-28 May
5	Barcelona (ESP)	3-4 June
6	Red Bull Ring (AUT)	1-2 July
7	Silverstone (GBR)	8-9 July
8	Hungaroring (HUN)	22-23 July
9	Spa (BEL)	29-30 July
10	Monza (ITA)	2-3 September

pace. Last year was not so much the case, so I think I learnt to be patient. Not everything comes overnight, and it’s something for sure I’ll be taking into this season.”

O’Sullivan, ever a calm and collected presence despite his young age, is coy about his expectations for such a key season. “Obviously it’d be nice to be at the front from round one,” he suggests, “but it’s not a disaster if we’re not. It’s a long championship with lots of points available, so we’ll see how it goes.” Despite his reluctance to big up his title chances, O’Sullivan says he is feeling confident: “I’m not nervous. I mean, it’s like any other season. I treat every season the same. Take it one day at a time, one test at a time, and we’ll see where we end up.”

Prema boss Rene Rosin has long been impressed by O’Sullivan, whose management had contacted the team ahead of the 2022 season. Once the contest came to its dramatic conclusion at Monza

“I’m not nervous. It’s like any other season. I treat each the same, one day at a time. We’ll see where we end up”

and it became clear that Bearman would graduate to F2, O’Sullivan’s people took another chance and, says Rosin, “very easily” reached an agreement for the 2023 campaign.

“He’s always been competitive and he always gave good feedback to the engineers, so this was very important,” Rosin says after the recent pre-season test in Bahrain. “Now of course we need to have time with him to analyse the plus and minus of everything and just to be ready for the first round. The goal is to be ready for the quali. Being P1 in free practice, honestly I don’t care, it doesn’t matter to me because it’s not what I’m looking for. I’m looking for building up confidence and momentum from the quali onwards. We have done a lot of stuff, a lot of testing, and we have been pretty satisfied with how everything went.”

Should O’Sullivan put in an impressive enough performance this season, he is likely to follow in 17-year-old Bearman’s footsteps in 2024. The giant step up from F4 to FIA F3 is a notoriously tough one, yet he had a stunning rookie season. Bearman scored only one win – and that was in a reversed-grid race at Spa – but there were five podiums across the nine feature races, a feat matched by no one, not even Martins. He also outscored his more experienced team-mates, Ferrari stablemate Arthur Leclerc and Red Bull Junior Jak Crawford, who were sixth and seventh respectively in the points.

Despite spending just one year in F3, Bearman reports that “we didn’t see the benefit of doing another year. During the summer break, it was pretty much planned to race in F3 again with Prema. We had a really strong last three rounds, or two let’s say because Zandvoort was a bit of a mess, but scored a lot of points. At that stage, my position in the championship I would say warranted a move to F2. But for me, it wasn’t on my mind, I was just focusing on the driving. Once I finished, I looked back and thought, yeah, I did a good job, but I was still expecting to do F3 again, considering my age and everything. But I’m glad that we took the decision to take F2. I feel like it’s a better step in my learning journey.”

Rosin also judged that Bearman was ready, and said after the events of Monza that there was “nothing else to do for him but move up. If the race [at Monza] would have finished its laps, I can try to bet that he would have won the championship because he was going to pass [Zane] Maloney, and passing Maloney would have been the championship move. As it was, the championship finished as it finished; Ollie was behind Victor and Zane, but he’s done a very good in his first season. After a season like that where you fight to the last laps to be champion, it was the right step to >>



O'Sullivan impressed
for Carlin in his
rookie F3 season

The other challengers: F3



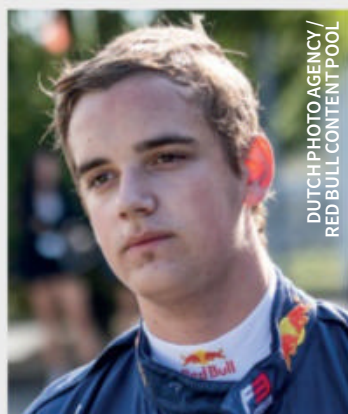
Dino Beganovic

The reigning FRECA champion will be looking to quickly assert himself in his rookie F3 season. Driving for Prema and with the Ferrari Driver Academy behind him, the Swede has the resources to succeed, but he'll have to adapt quickly to be in with a chance of beating more experienced rivals. He scored four wins on his way to the FRECA crown, and has started 2023 with two wins from two outings in FRegional Middle East.



Franco Colapinto

Colapinto will be looking to use his strong rookie season of 2022 as a springboard to a title challenge. The Argentinian took two wins with Van Amersfoort Racing to finish ninth overall. His move across the Netherlands to MP Motorsport could prove fruitful, given that team finished two places higher in the teams' standings in 2022, and his recent recruitment to the Williams Driver Academy will prove a useful boost.



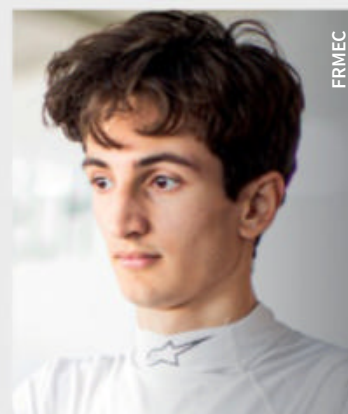
Jonny Edgar

The 2020 German F4 champ, Edgar is entering his third year of F3 competition, but illness has severely impacted his progress in the past and even caused him to miss races in 2022. But after he returned, the Red Bull junior finished 2022 with a run of six consecutive top-10 finishes from the final three events, an impressive comeback to finish 12th overall. The Cumbrian, now 19, makes the move from Trident to MP Motorsport for 2023.



Oliver Goethe

Although technically a rookie in 2023, Goethe made his F3 debut in 2022, driving at Spa and the Hungaroring for Campos Racing. It was an impressive showing for the dominant 2022 Euroformula Open champion, including a fourth in the Spa feature race, and allowed him to capture the attention of Trident for 2023. The Italian squad finished second last year, and fields an all-rookie line-up this time around.



Gabriele Mini

After losing out to Dino Beganovic in the FRECA title fight, Mini will be keen to reassert himself in F3 this season. The 17-year-old Sicilian, who last won a title in 2020 in Italian F4, joins Hitech for his rookie F3 campaign, and topped the first day of post-season testing last year at Jerez. Newly installed as a member of the Alpine Academy, he is managed by Nicolas Todt, who has been instrumental in Charles Leclerc's career.



Bearman convinced
Prema in F3 he was
ready to step up

SUTTON
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The other challengers: F2



BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Theo Pourchaire

This is a must-win season for the Frenchman. The Alfa Romeo F1 reserve is continuing with ART for his third year in F2, and faces the most pressure of any driver on the grid, while also expecting some very strong competition to improve on his runner-up spot from 2022. But a third F2 season has proven successful for drivers in the past, as 2022 champion Felipe Drugovich and 2019 title winner Nyck de Vries can attest.



BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Jack Doohan

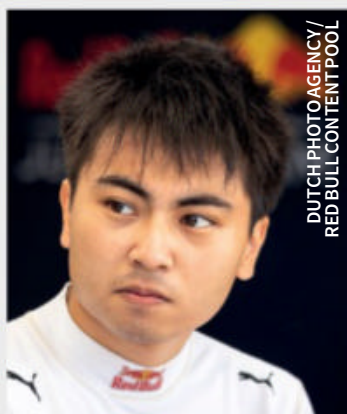
The Australian also faces a lot of pressure heading into his second F2 season with Virtuosi. He finished sixth as a very strong rookie last year, although that felt unrepresentative of his impressive showings throughout the mid-season. The Alpine Academy member looked close to an F1 seat amid the Piastri contractual wrangles, but he now has another year to prove himself before he's in with a shot at the big time.



FORMULA MOTORSPORT LIMITED

Victor Martins

The reigning F3 champion leads the rookies heading into this season, with fellow title contenders Zane Maloney and Ollie Bearman sure to be snapping at his heels. The Alpine Academy driver has remained with ART for his step up, and will hope to emulate Oscar Piastri's 2021 F2 title success as the reigning F3 champion. The 21-year-old Frenchman has already been showing well in testing so it's not out of the question.



DUTCH PHOTOAGENCY/
RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Ayumu Iwasa

Not much was expected from Iwasa in 2022 after a middling F3 season the year before, but he had a very strong campaign, with two wins in feature races propelling him to fifth in the points. The Red Bull and Honda junior had a wobbly mid-season but steadily climbed the standings. He remains with DAMS and, if he can continue his good tyre management and brave overtakes, Iwasa could be in the mix for the title.



DUTCH PHOTOAGENCY/
RED BULL CONTENT POOL

Dennis Hauger

After struggling to adapt to F2 with Prema last season, 2021 F3 champion Hauger moves to reigning double champion MP Motorsport for 2023. He'll be hoping to improve on his 10th place finish in the standings, highlighted by Baku feature and Monaco sprint wins, although he came close to the podium on several more occasions. Will the team be able to replicate its stunning 2022 title charge, or return to the midfield?

move up. So I'm really excited, because he's a rookie but I'm sure that together we can do a good job."

Bearman feels he has "grown up massively as a person" in the past year, pointing to the step in professionalism between F4 and F3. His work with Ferrari has also intensified, becoming more integrated with the F1 team. The entire top seven from last year's F3 standings – Martins, Maloney, Bearman, Isack Hadjar, Roman Stanek, Leclerc and Crawford – are graduating to F2 this season, and the field also includes Alfa Romeo F1 reserve driver and 2022 runner-up Theo Pourchaire and Alpine reserve Jack Doohan. It's going to be tough.

"My goal is just to keep improving," admits Bearman. "It's a fairly simple goal, but it's an effective one I took last year in F3 and it worked out quite well. I just want to look back on the weekend and have improved from the previous weekend. Also not to make the same mistake twice, which although I made a few too many

“My goal is just to keep improving. It’s simple, but effective. Also not to make the same mistake twice”

mistakes in F3 last year, especially with the start, it's something that I did well – I didn't make the same mistake again.

"I haven't really set any expectations, I think we need to see where we stand after the first couple of rounds. Jeddah and Melbourne are question marks, having not driven either before, so I'll wait until the European rounds and see where we really stand."

Bearman has already tackled two rounds of testing in the F2 car, at Yas Marina and in Bahrain, and says that although it's "tough to gauge" his performance against his rivals, he completed his run programme across the three days in Bahrain and "made a step in all areas". "Of course, we're trying things to find as much as we can, but that's how every test goes," he says. "On that side it was a good test. On my side the tyre management was something that was more difficult to get up to speed with, especially on a high degradation track like Bahrain. So that was one of the areas of focus that we highlighted, but that's what we'll be aiming for, I guess."

Bearman will line up alongside Frederik Vesti in 2023 as part of an all-new F2 line-up for Prema. Mercedes junior Vesti finished ninth last year with ART, but returns to the team with which he claimed the Formula Regional title in 2019 and won races in F3 in 2020. His F2 experience has already proved beneficial to Bearman, and the pair will be looking to return Prema to the top of the standings. The squad had a tough time in F2 in 2022, but did the double in 2020 and 2021, scoring teams' titles and drivers' crowns with Mick Schumacher and Oscar Piastri respectively.

The pair replace Dennis Hauger and Jehan Daruvala, who have both moved to MP Motorsport. Although Prema underperformed compared to its usual standards last year, Rosin reckons it was "not extremely bad," with the pair scoring three wins between them.

"To be fair, we didn't score the amount of points we expected," Rosin states. "Of course, I want to bounce back. My greatest challenge is to show what Prema is capable of doing, and I think with Fred and Ollie we can do it. Nothing against Dennis and Jehan, but I'm really looking forward to Bahrain."

Does he have high expectations for Bearman? "It's the same as everybody," he adds. "We need to look race by race, try to maximise the results. I don't want to make any comparisons, I don't want to remember any other year where we had rookies, because in F2 it's possible to win as a rookie. For me, Ollie is doing it in the best way possible and I'm sure the results will come."

For both Bearman and O'Sullivan, there's no reason why those results can't arrive. 🌟

F2 entry list

NO	DRIVER	TEAM
1	Dennis Hauger (NOR)	MP Motorsport
2	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	MP Motorsport
3	Zane Maloney (BAR)	Rodin Carlin
4	Enzo Fittipaldi (BRA)	Rodin Carlin
5	Theo Pourchaire (FRA)	ART Grand Prix
6	Victor Martins (FRA)	ART Grand Prix
7	Frederik Vesti (DNK)	Prema Racing
8	Ollie Bearman (GBR)	Prema Racing
9	Jak Crawford (USA)	Hitech Grand Prix
10	Isack Hadjar (FRA)	Hitech Grand Prix
11	Ayumu Iwasa (JPN)	DAMS
12	Arthur Leclerc (MCO)	DAMS
14	Jack Doohan (AUS)	Virtuosi Racing
15	Amaury Cordeel (BEL)	Virtuosi Racing
16	Roy Nissany (ISR)	PHM Racing by Charouz
17	Brad Benavides (USA)	PHM Racing by Charouz
20	Roman Stanek (CZE)	Trident
21	Clement Novalak (FRA)	Trident
22	Richard Verschoor (NLD)	Van Amersfoort Racing
23	Juan Manuel Correa (USA)	Van Amersfoort Racing
24	Kush Maini (IND)	Campos Racing
25	Ralph Boschung (CHE)	Campos Racing

F2 calendar

RD	VENUE	DATE
1	Sakhir (BHR)	4-5 March
2	Jeddah (SAU)	18-19 March
3	Albert Park (AUS)	1-2 April
4	Baku (AZE)	29-30 April
5	Imola (ITA)	20-21 May
6	Monte Carlo (MCO)	27-28 May
7	Barcelona (ESP)	3-4 June
8	Red Bull Ring (AUT)	1-2 July
9	Silverstone (GBR)	8-9 July
10	Hungaroring (HUN)	22-23 July
11	Spa (BEL)	29-30 July
12	Zandvoort (NLD)	26-27 August
13	Monza (ITA)	2-3 September
14	Yas Marina (ARE)	25-26 November

WHO NEEDS A BIG YEAR IN INDYCAR?

Nothing can be taken for granted as the new IndyCar season prepares for launch – and as ever, reputations are on the precipice at the pinnacle of US single-seater racing

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY INDYCAR

A cast list of drivers largely staying the same, and largely in the same places, might lead you to expect the 2023 IndyCar season to be a rerun of 2022. This belief could be compounded by the fact that the campaign ahead will be the 12th for the 2.2-litre twin-turbo V6s from Chevrolet and Honda, the sixth for the universal aerokit, and the fourth for the aeroscreen. Even the schedule is largely the same, aside from Detroit's race switching from Belle Isle to a new 1.7-mile course in downtown Motown.

But it's the very tightness of the formula that from year to year can nudge the narrative in a different direction, according to mini breakthroughs with engine, aerodynamics, shocks and dampers. For example, who would have expected in the twilight of the current engine era that Chevrolet could gain such a noticeable edge for 2022 so that it could take 11 wins and 13 poles from 17 races after four straight years of defeat in the manufacturers' championship? Did anyone foresee Andretti Autosport suddenly becoming strong on the Indy road course – formerly its bete noire – yet lose its previous superiority on street courses as Penske caught up?

Of course, IndyCar isn't always about burning the formbook. Some existing themes were extended in 2022, including Chip Ganassi Racing's superiority at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which actually increased. But who would be shocked if Ganassi's forte in 2023 became temporary tracks, and Penske suddenly returned to its 2018-19 form at the Speedway? These are, after all, two of the greatest open-wheel teams in the world.

The point is, in IndyCar the formbook should be regarded only

as a guide, not an almanac, even as these cars and this formula approaches the end of its life cycle. The biggest brains in the paddock are trying to squeeze out the last fractions of potential from their cars and have been poring over data accumulated from their race weekend notes, the simulator, the wind tunnel and the shaker rig. Chances are, they've found plenty of items to investigate in opening practice sessions during the season's first quarter.

Nonetheless, the spec nature of the cars does throw the emphasis very much onto the drivers, and for some this has to be a huge year.

Felix Rosenqvist has the spectre of Alex Palou hanging over him as he enters his third season at Arrow McLaren. The team has expanded to three full-time cars this year, but Rosenqvist only retained his seat after Palou failed to extract himself from Ganassi, and the 31-year-old Swede knows that incumbent team-mate Pato O'Ward and newly arrived stablemate Alexander Rossi both have AM contracts that will see them through next year, too. So assuming Palou is McLaren-bound yet can't find a race seat in the Formula 1 team for 2024, then Rosenqvist is fighting for a place in IndyCar for 2024.

Rosenqvist brushes off the topic, says the right things – "I feel

"The formbook should be regarded only as a guide, not an almanac, as this formula nears the end of its life"

Life's a blur:
IndyCar teams and
drivers will take in 17
rounds, starting from
this weekend in
St Petersburg



like I have a good support from the team to go and perform," etc — but he's not naive. He knows he must elevate his chances of a worthy ride next year by shining when in direct comparison with O'Ward and Rosenqvist. Can he do it? Well, losing his former race engineer Craig Hampson to Rossi is a blow, but Rosenqvist and others speak highly of replacement Chris Lawrence, who has served as assistant race engineer on the #7 car that Rosenqvist previously drove. And without question, he has potential that has not yet borne fruit and possesses remarkable resilience. He outqualified O'Ward only four times in 2022, but twice that resulted in pole position, and he was rarely a long way off the Mexican. More relevantly, there were enough times when Rosenqvist outraced him, too, which suggests he can do enough to prove himself to potential new employers.

Ex-F1 ace Romain Grosjean is another driver with much to prove in 2023, despite having a secure option with Andretti Autosport for 2024. With only a single podium to his name from his first season with AA — albeit in a very up-and-down year for Michael Andretti's squad — he was frankly a disappointment for much »





Will Power headed the pack last year. At 42, he aims for a third crown

ABBOTT/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



Jack Harvey (also below right) endured a tough 2022 with his new team

BLACK

of 2022. 'RoGro' could look extremely fast and then make an error, or he could fade into mediocrity, as the line between pace and prudence often eluded him. And things won't get any easier, since the ultra-fast Colton Herta remains at the team, and the departing Rossi has been replaced by America's next Boy Wonder, Kyle Kirkwood.

Or at least we *think* Kirkwood is the next big thing. His record in junior formulas is impeccable, but the jury is out because his rookie season at AJ Foyt Racing contained too many incidents – to which he readily admits. "That's completely fair to say," he agrees. "When you're 20th and you feel stuck, naturally you're not going to just give up, you're going to push to the absolute limits. In a sense that's what we did [at Foyt]. We overachieved some places and we underachieved by trying to overachieve at some other places! It's unfortunate, but I learned so much and I can't wait to take what I learned into this season."

If pre-season testing is representative, Kirkwood has immediately adapted back to the Andretti Autosport set-ups that he first tested as reward for winning the Indy Lights title in 2021. The intra-team battle between him, Herta and Grosjean will be fascinating.

Their semi-team-mates at Meyer Shank Racing, Helio Castroneves and Simon Pagenaud, will need big helpings of points this season, after finishing 18th and 15th respectively in 2022. For sure, the alliance with AA is a double-edged sword, but it was a shock that so frequently this experienced pair – 46 wins and more

"When you are 20th and you feel stuck, naturally you're not going to just give up, you're going to push"

than 500 starts between them – could not find a set-up that suited them or Firestone's tyre compounds. Another year like the last, and Michael Shank and Jim Meyer may conclude that wholesale change is needed in its line-up, especially with IMSA champion Tom Blomqvist in-house and more than willing to switch disciplines...

The IndyCar driver with the most to prove this year is Jack Harvey, who endured a wretched first season with Rahal Letterman Lanigan. While the team also struggled in the first half of 2022, its mid-season turnaround seemed only to benefit Harvey's teammates Graham Rahal and Christian Lundgaard. 'Hy-Vee' has been switched to Lundgaard's car this year, which is not exactly a vote of confidence for Harvey, but he's gritty enough to ride that out. The key to improving his form, he says, is to "become more flexible" when chasing set-ups, accept when his car's handling isn't ideal, and instead adapt his driving to suit what he's got. Otherwise he's going to find himself buried in a field that now includes 27 full-time entries. Of the drivers who raced in every round of 2022, Dalton Kellett and Jimmie Johnson have gone, while the rookie intake comprises Marcus Armstrong (road and street courses for Chip Ganassi Racing, in a ride-share with oval-only veteran Takuma Sato), Indy Lights graduates Sting Ray Robb and Benjamin Pedersen joining Foyt and Dale Coyne Racing respectively, and Argentine touring car legend Agustin Canapino swelling Juncos Hollinger Racing's presence from one car to two. 



Kyle Kirkwood: new ride, new colours at Andretti

OWENS

OWENS

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN INDYCAR IN 2023

Penske and Ganassi remain the targets for Arrow McLaren and Andretti. Can either dethrone the top teams? Both have the driving talent to manage it

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY INDYCAR

PENSKE TEAM-MATE BATTLE

Two-time IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden has finished three straight years as runner-up in the title race and, in this writer's opinion, in two of those years he was marginally the best. How does a driver as ruthlessly determined as the 32-year-old Tennessean deal with that? Well, he comes back harder. And, according to the man himself, he has no intention of compromising the way he tackles a race weekend.

"I don't know that we need to change anything as far as our approach or process," says Newgarden, who is entering his seventh year with Team Penske. "I think everything that we're doing is what we need to be doing."

"IndyCar just has that intangible side to it where you can't predict everything. It's preparation, hard work, maximising each day, then... the tides need to flow for you."

But his team-mate Will Power is the defending champion for a reason. He showed better than anyone last year how to win a title; no matter where he found himself in the early laps of a race, his eyes were on the final prize. Power still has the devastating qualifying pace, even though there were one or two anomalies last year, and his ability to judge passing opportunities is closer to flawless than it's ever been. He has also learned how to let frustration evaporate rather than seep into his preparations for the next session, the next race, the next lap.

While both Power and Newgarden are formidable, they now know their colleague Scott McLaughlin is the real deal in open-wheel. The three-time Supercars champ scored three wins last year and was only an Indy 500 shunt and a Detroit error away from a genuine tilt at the title in the finale. In his third season at this level, he should be even stronger.



Two-time champion
Newgarden: time to break
the recent bridesmaid habit?

BLACK



Alexander Rossi is banking
on Arrow McLaren after
switching from Andretti

OWENS

CAN EXPANDED ARROW McLAREN TAKE THE TITLE?

It seems every year we ask a question along the lines of whether Arrow McLaren will join Penske and Ganassi to form IndyCar's 'Big Three'. It's debatable whether the team has now replaced Andretti Autosport as the series' third best team, but we can say with some certainty that it's not yet proven in the top rank in terms of race-in/race-out consistency.

But one gets the feeling that potential is there, and that nothing will deviate the Zak Brown-led team from its course towards the top. Will the arrival of Alexander Rossi in a third full-time car accelerate that progress? Not in itself, no: few if any drivers have the power to do that. But McLaren has been able to retain its best staff and lure similarly strong individuals from rival outfits — at a time when recruitment of top-line team members is difficult due to booming grid numbers in IndyCar and IMSA — thus proving the investment this team is prepared to make.

So we can be sure that the three cars of Pato O'Ward, Felix Rosenqvist and Rossi will be crewed and engineered by some of the greatest talents in the pitlane. In 2023, Arrow McLaren has no excuse not to arrive at the Laguna Seca finale with at least one driver in contention for the championship. »



Going green: F2 graduate
Armstrong will share
Ganassi entry with Sato

ARMSTRONG AND SATO GRAB THEIR CHANCES

A two-day test at Thermal Club in early February can't tell a team *all* it has to know about a rookie's ultimate potential. But 22-year-old New Zealander Marcus Armstrong, a race winner in Formula 2, looks ready to keep his star team-mates on their toes — at least.

In his first year, no one expects Armstrong to devastate the opposition like Alex Palou at Laguna Seca or turn mud into chocolate like Scott Dixon at Nashville. But focusing only on road and street courses will allow him to learn the car, find its limit on hot and worn or fresh but cold tyres, and push to the nth degree on alternate compounds in qualifying. So long as Armstrong has swiftly taken advantage of the vast human and technical resources at Chip Ganassi Racing, his talent should soon become clear.

The same applies to veteran Takuma Sato, who will drive Armstrong's #11 entry in the five oval races on this year's schedule. Last year, Sato impressed Dale Coyne Racing with his ability to adapt to the team's oval set-ups, which differed from those the two-time Indy 500 winner had found at Rahal Letterman Lanigan. Now Sato brings his oval expertise to a team that kicked ass at Indy, in terms of pace, for the last three years. Will he make the team stronger? Will the team make Sato stronger? It could be a great

combo, as Sato gets to enjoy a squad that knows exactly how to find that last scintilla of speed in evolving track conditions.

COLTON HERTA – 2023 CHAMPION?

For the umpteenth time we point out that Andretti Autosport was the last team to break the Penske/Ganassi stranglehold on the IndyCar championship. And for the umpteenth time we look to the season ahead and wonder if Michael Andretti's squad has what it takes to reach that level again.

Colton Herta has the speed, intelligence and work ethic to be a champion, and Nathan O'Rourke is one of the best race engineers in the pitlane. Together they can make a driver-car combo that is a match for anyone. But their worst days need to get much better. There were some troubling shunts from Herta in 2022, some of them unforced errors, that have to be eliminated if he is to earn the title his talent deserves. And as a whole, Andretti Autosport must make greater progress over a race weekend.

Over the past three seasons, there were too many times when the quartet of AA cars rolled off the trailers on Friday as eighth-placed cars and never evolved into podium contenders by Sunday in the manner that you'd expect from, say, Ganassi.

Consistency
must be king if
Colton Herta wants
to be crowned at
Andretti Autosport
this term





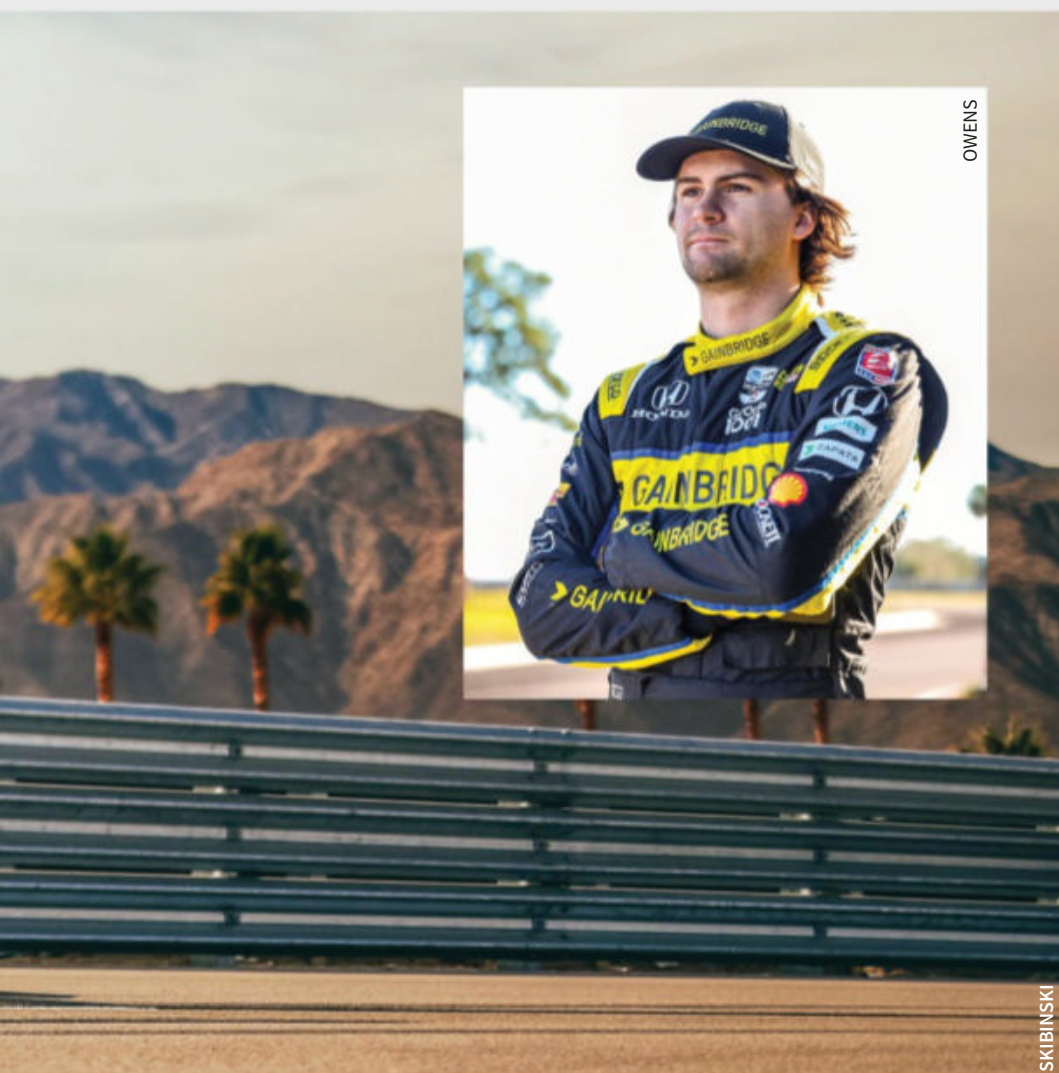
Callum Ilott looks potent for Juncos Hollinger

CAN MALUKAS AND ILOTT SPRING UNDERDOG SURPRISES?

In the case of David Malukas, without question. At Gateway last year, the 2021 Indy Lights runner-up was probably only two laps from scoring Dale Coyne Racing's seventh win, and his blossoming confidence on road and street courses put him in regular contention for the Firestone Fast Six.

To see Malukas score a couple more podiums this year will require a fit and well-drilled pitcrew, and for him to develop the same relationship with Alex Athanasiadis – the team's former performance engineer – as he enjoyed with Ross Bunnell, who has joined Chip Ganassi Racing as Dixon's race engineer.

Juncos Hollinger Racing, newly expanded to run a second full-time entry for touring car ace but IndyCar rookie Agustin Canapino, is the smallest team in the paddock, but in Callum Ilott it appears to have an unpolished gem. Despite JHR being the only single-car team on the grid last year, the Briton started six races in the top half of the field, culminating in a front-row slot at the finale at Laguna Seca. Ilott's speed in testing suggests that momentum has been maintained for 2023. Does the team have the strength in depth to help Ilott embarrass some of his better-established peers? One can only hope. 🍀



ENTRY LIST

NO	DRIVER	TEAM
2	Josef Newgarden	Team Penske (Chevrolet)
3	Scott McLaughlin	Team Penske (Chevrolet)
12	Will Power	Team Penske (Chevrolet)
5	Pato O'Ward	Arrow McLaren (Chevrolet)
6	Felix Rosenqvist	Arrow McLaren (Chevrolet)
7	Alexander Rossi	Arrow McLaren (Chevrolet)
66	Tony Kanaan	Arrow McLaren (Chevrolet)*
06	Helio Castroneves	Meyer Shank Racing (Honda)
60	Simon Pagenaud	Meyer Shank Racing (Honda)
8	Marcus Ericsson	Chip Ganassi Racing (Honda)
9	Scott Dixon	Chip Ganassi Racing (Honda)
10	Alex Palou	Chip Ganassi Racing (Honda)
11	Marcus Armstrong	Chip Ganassi Racing (Honda)***
11	Takuma Sato	Chip Ganassi Racing (Honda)**
14	Santino Ferrucci	AJ Foyt Racing (Chevrolet)
55	Benjamin Pedersen	AJ Foyt Racing (Chevrolet)
15	Graham Rahal	Rahal Letterman Lanigan (Honda)
30	Jack Harvey	Rahal Letterman Lanigan (Honda)
44	Katherine Legge	Rahal Letterman Lanigan (Honda)*
45	Christian Lundgaard	Rahal Letterman Lanigan (Honda)
18	David Malukas	Dale Coyne Racing (Honda)
51	Sting Ray Robb	Dale Coyne Racing (Honda)
20	Conor Daly	Ed Carpenter Racing (Chevrolet)
21	Rinus VeeKay	Ed Carpenter Racing (Chevrolet)
33	Ed Carpenter	Ed Carpenter Racing (Chevrolet)**
23	TBC	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing (Chevrolet)*
24	Stefan Wilson	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing (Chevrolet)*
26	Colton Herta	Andretti Autosport (Honda)
27	Kyle Kirkwood	Andretti Autosport (Honda)
28	Romain Grosjean	Andretti Autosport (Honda)
29	Devlin DeFrancesco	Andretti Autosport (Honda)
98	Marco Andretti	Andretti Autosport (Honda)*
77	Callum Ilott	Juncos Hollinger Racing (Chevrolet)
78	Agustin Canapino	Juncos Hollinger Racing (Chevrolet)

*Indianapolis 500 only, **ovals only, *** road/street courses only

2023 INDYCAR CALENDAR

RD	VENUE	DATE
1	St Petersburg	5 March
2	Texas Motor Speedway	2 April
3	Long Beach	16 April
4	Barber Motorsports Park	30 April
5	Indianapolis	13 May
6	Indianapolis 500	28 May
7	Detroit	4 June
8	Road America	18 June
9	Mid-Ohio	2 July
10	Toronto	16 July
11	Iowa Speedway	22 July
12	Iowa Speedway	23 July
13	Nashville	6 August
14	Indianapolis	12 August
15	Gateway	27 August
16	Portland	3 September
17	Laguna Seca	10 September

RACE CENTRE



Da Costa conquers the Cape in classic confrontation

In one of Formula E's finest races yet, the Porsche driver stunned with late moves to win from outside the top 10

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY



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IMAGES

In 1488, the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias became the first European to navigate the Cape of Good Hope, the peninsula that protrudes from the land that would later become part of South Africa in the modern era. He named it “The Cape of Storms”, and it became a key landmark in early European sea trade to Asia as global exploration by boat later reached its zenith in the 1500s.

Perhaps it's fitting, then, that on Formula E's first visit to the bustling trade hub that spawned above it, it was another native of Portugal who successfully traversed the Cape; from 11th on the grid, Porsche's Antonio Felix da Costa weathered the storm to clinch his first victory of the season in scintillating fashion.

It's been nearly 30 years since South Africa last held a world championship single-seater race, the 1993 South African Grand Prix at Kyalami. Formula E, after a year's delay, broke that hiatus in a bombastic and breathless Cape Town encounter that will probably go down as one of the championship's greatest races.

Bookended by Table Mountain and the South Atlantic Ocean, Cape Town's Green Point district is easily one of the most visually spectacular sites for a race to take place. The circuit itself featured a fast and flowing stretch along the beachfront, before folding into the parkland that homes the Cape Town Stadium to produce a venue that promised fast, flowing and frantic action. On every front, it delivered; a sell-out crowd came to celebrate a leap forward in South African motorsport, and they were treated to a race that had every conceivable quality in spades.

Da Costa's bravery was at the heart of his spellbinding drive, ironically at the expense of a driver who had dismissed that very attribute before the weekend. Speaking in the pre-race press conference, Hyderabad winner Jean-Eric Vergne suggested that the need to “get everything under control” was more important in tackling the 1.8-mile course around Cape Town than “being brave”. To his credit, approximately 20 minutes after being dispatched by an audacious da Costa overtake, Vergne retracted that comment.

The opening four races of the 2023 season had been of a single theme: that of the burgeoning title battle between Pascal Wehrlein and Jake Dennis. After Dennis drew first blood in Mexico City, Wehrlein's double Diriyah wins put the two above the rest of the field, the German extending his title lead in Hyderabad with fourth place. That said, the emergence of Jaguar and DS Penske after the opening rounds of the season had suggested that the Porsche-powered duo would not have the run of the place thereafter.

For all its pace, the works Jaguar squad had found new ways to self-combust as Sam Bird speared into Mitch Evans in India to knock both cars out of the running. While Vergne led DS »

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Penske's efforts with his win there, the softly spoken Nick Cassidy quietly emerged as the Jag-powered Envision team's leading light.

Hyderabad's form partially looked to have carried over into practice when Cassidy ended the pair of sessions on top of the pile, but this was before qualifying in Cape Town proved to be something of a palate-cleanser from the season's bigger-ticket storylines. The nature of the session had been foreshadowed by Sebastien Buemi's Turn 9 crash in FP1, when the Swiss carried too much speed through the downhill and high-speed left-hander and slapped his Envision Jaguar against the outside wall.

Group A had been relatively clean, and da Costa and Dennis were the biggest scalps claimed by those who made the duels, Nissan's Sacha Fenestraz dumping 2019-20 champion da Costa out of the

“Fenestraz dazzled and outpaced Guenther to secure a first pole in his sixth Formula E start”

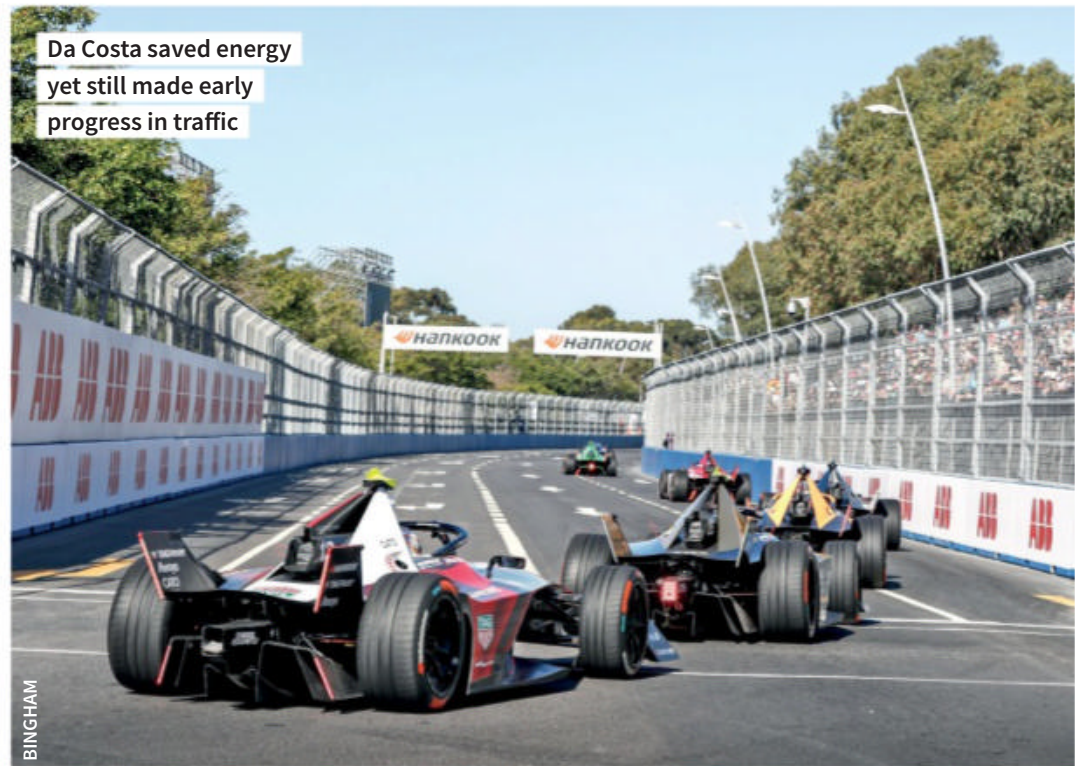
top four with an assured lap to head the session. But Group B was messy; Edoardo Mortara hit the Turn 9 wall in his Maserati to bring out a red flag, and Bird followed him in about 20 seconds later, hamstrung by a delay to the red flag signals as he approached the right-left flick on entry.

Bird had looked threatening up until that moment, but offered the on-the-cusp Maximilian Guenther safe passage into the duels – the German narrowly missed his stricken Maserati MSG team-mate's car by a hair to set up a battle with countryman Rene Rast. The Bavarian beat McLaren driver Rast as the Italo-Monegasque team showed improved pace following a difficult opening to the year, making the final after beating Evans by 0.3s in their semi-final.

Fenestraz had an equally difficult road ahead, but buccaneered his way past Vergne and Cassidy to set up a left-field finale, guaranteeing a new Formula E polesitter whichever way the tempestuous winds blew. It was Guenther who fell at the final hurdle, as Fenestraz dazzled and outpaced the three-time race winner by 0.4s to secure a first pole in his sixth FE start.

After grid penalties and withdrawals were applied, da Costa took up 11th on the grid and could be generously billed as an ‘outside bet’ in normal circumstances. But the norm was not expected; drivers spoke of leading the early phases as nothing more than an inconvenience given the energy-hungry nature of the devilishly quick Cape Town course. He barely entered the E-Prix's lexicon in the opening phases, amid a race so wild that it could barely be contained in one of the local safari parks.

Speaking after the race, da Costa explained that he'd allotted the “first 40%” of the event for energy-saving purposes. Content to run in the pack, he was still nonetheless making up ground; he'd cleared



Da Costa saved energy yet still made early progress in traffic

Norman Nato at the start, but an unlikely benefactor in the shape of his championship-leading team-mate offered two more places by the close of the first lap.

On the run into Turn 10, where the circuit diverted away from the Mouille Point beach, Wehrlein was all at sea on the brakes and ran into the back of Buemi, coming to rest in the run-off. Buemi managed to escape with little damage, but da Costa was now up to eighth as the race order was frozen thanks to a safety car period.

Once green-flag running resumed, da Costa was able to shuffle up three more places in the following laps. Dan Ticktum picked up his first dose of attack mode on lap eight, while Evans was slapped with a drive-through penalty for an overpower spike that brought his own victory hopes to rest. Now sixth, da Costa moved up a further position on the 15th tour when Rast took his own hit of 350kW power, and crucially maintained it when reaching for a three-minute activation a lap later.

Vergne was next on his list, but it took a second attack mode to clear the pipes and bring da Costa into touch with the leading trio of Cassidy, Fenestraz and Guenther. The Maserati had led through the opening safety car period, but only through overtaking polesitter Fenestraz, before the two were cleared by the hard-charging Cassidy through their own attack mode battles. At this juncture, Fenestraz was keeping in touch with the Kiwi, but Guenther's clumsy brush with the wall at Turn 1 threw another spanner into the works.

Perhaps anticipating a yellow-flag-enforced stoppage as Guenther parked up at the Turns 4/5 chicane, Cassidy and Fenestraz opted to pick up their second attack modes, but the Nissan man ceded two positions to da Costa and Vergne seconds before the full-course yellow took effect. The order was not frozen for long – the >>



Fenestraz took a surprise pole position and led before Guenther hit the front



Wehrlein was out after ploughing into Buemi, who recovered to fifth



damaged Maserati MSG was cleared up swiftly, setting up a battle for the lead once the green flag had flown.

Having led for much of the race thus far, Cassidy was at an energy disadvantage to da Costa and seemed ripe for the picking. On the 24th lap, da Costa chased the Envision Jaguar out of Turn 7 and swept around the outside of the Turn 8 kink, getting the inside line for the next corner to pick up the lead in stunning fashion. With Cassidy still trying to save energy, the Porsche driver easily built enough of a gap to theoretically take attack mode and return to the circuit in the lead. Vergne made his way past Cassidy too, but da Costa had enough to go off-line and remain in front.

Except, it didn't quite work out. Da Costa missed one of the three activation loops, proving only to be an exercise in losing time to the chasing Vergne, and the two were now split by just over half a second. Da Costa had to take a second bite of the cherry two laps later, granting Vergne the lead – a day after the Frenchman reckoned winning in South Africa would be “completely unrealistic”.

Lesser drivers would have wilted under the disappointment, but da Costa was not about to let the win go. By returning in Vergne's wheeltracks, he could actually bank a little more energy for a late-race charge, particularly as the earlier safety car period resulted in two laps being added on. The two were separated by a whisker and, on the penultimate lap, da Costa made his ultimate play.

It was a near-carbon copy of the move he'd put on Cassidy. Grabbing onto Vergne's coat-tails on the exit of Turn 7, da Costa expected his former team-mate to be armed with the knowledge of his previous efforts into Turn 8. In that instance, the Porsche

“I knew I had the right guys next to me to cooperate on these overtakes and I was up on energy”

dummied right to let Vergne cover, and then switched sides and squeezed through at Turn 8 – the two barely separated by a cigarette paper through the corner – to leave the crowd in raptures. Although he remained on da Costa's tail, Vergne couldn't return the favour: the battle was over, and da Costa admitted that he'd cried with joy throughout the entire in-lap as the gravity of the situation began to sink in.

“I knew I had the right guys next to me to cooperate through these overtakes,” da Costa explained after the race. “And obviously I was up on energy, so I could afford to pull these overtakes. It feels really good.”

“The race played out perfectly for us with the second safety car, making everyone having to save a little bit more energy. That helped me. I tried to save a little bit of energy in the first 40% of the race, and the race came to us – everything just played out how we wanted it to.”

“Some days it's like this, it just comes your way. And I'm happy that I was able to pull the rabbit out of the hat when I had to.”

Of course, da Costa's race-winning move would simply not have been possible if not for that attack mode fumble, but Vergne reckoned that missing the timing loops actually played into the Cascais-born driver's hands owing to the advantage of having a slipstream in the late stages of the race.

“This is the moment where he could get more energy and put that attack on me,” Vergne concluded. “I think that if he didn't miss the attack mode, I would've stayed behind him, saved energy, and then maybe be in a position to make that move.”

An overwhelmingly popular event among the drivers, Cape Town's stunning vistas and beachside proximity were already spectacular. A breathless race only enhanced that, leaving Formula E's fanbase hoping for more races in South Africa's Mother City, and da Costa's sail to victory around the Cape echoed that of his forefathers in the 15th century.

Translated literally into English, Antonio Felix da Costa's name can be interpreted as ‘Anthony: felicitous, of the coast’. There could not be a more apt winner of Cape Town's inaugural Formula E race than he. 🏆



IN THE HEADLINES

PODIUM BATTLERS CLASH

Polesitter Sacha Fenestraz and Nick Cassidy disagreed over who was to blame in their last-lap contact that decided their battle for third in the Kiwi's favour. "He was nowhere near side by side," reckoned Fenestraz, who was put into the Turn 7 wall with broken suspension, while Cassidy reckoned his rival "left the door really open" before moving over under braking to create contact.

BIRD SPEAKS OUT...

Sam Bird hit out at the lack of yellow or red flags immediately after Edoardo Mortara's qualifying crash, and said his accident was down to getting "spooked" by a radio call. "I braked too hard in an area where you shouldn't and it fired the brake bias to the rear," he said, citing a 21-second gap from Mortara's crash and a red flag being shown.

...AND SO DOES GUENTHER

Like Bird, Maximilian Guenther took issue with delays to showing yellow flags, after his pass on leader Sacha Fenestraz under the initial full-course-yellow period. This will cost the German three places from wherever he qualifies in Sao Paulo. "It's true that there is some weird lag on the system, but they could have told him earlier to give the place back," Fenestraz reckoned.

WEHRLEIN'S MISTAKE

Pascal Wehrlein accepted fault in his first-lap crash with Sebastien Buemi, for which he will receive a three-place grid penalty in Sao Paulo. "When I realised I was braking too late, I tried to break even harder," Wehrlein said. Buemi was last at the end of the first lap, but still finished an excellent fifth.

MAHINDRA'S WITHDRAWAL

Mahindra withdrew all four of its cars, including those from Abt, from the Cape Town race following concerns over its rear suspension safety. The team will review its suspension components back at base and hopes to find a fix prior to the Sao Paulo round in late March. This denied Abt's Kelvin van der Linde (below) a chance to impress in his home race.



RESULTS ROUND 4/11, CAPE TOWN (ZAF), 25 FEBRUARY (32 LAPS – 58.081 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	42m25.403s
2	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	+0.281s
3	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+1.808s
4	Rene Rast (DEU)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+2.208s
5	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Envision Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+2.656s
6	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	+3.209s
7	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	DS Penske / DSE-Tense FE23	+4.210s
8	Norman Nato (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+8.582s
9	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+8.755s
10	Jake Hughes (GBR)	McLaren / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+10.475s
11	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	+14.183s
12	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 ER9	+14.914s
13	Jake Dennis (GBR)	Andretti / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	+38.846s
NC	Sacha Fenestraz (FRA)	Nissan / Nissan e-4ORCE 04	+47.613s/accident
R	Maximilian Gunther (DEU)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	20 laps-accident
R	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Maserati / Maserati Tipo Folgore	1 lap-mechanical
R	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric Gen3	0 laps-accident
NS	Sam Bird (GBR)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-Type 6	qual accident
NS	Kelvin van der Linde (ZAF)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	suspension
NS	Nico Muller (CHE)	Abt / Mahindra M9Electro	suspension
NS	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	suspension
NS	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M9Electro	suspension

Winner's average speed 82.144mph. **Fastest lap** Vergne 1m09.740s, 93.692mph.

QUALIFYING 1 Fenestraz 1m07.848s; 2 Gunther 1m08.270s; 3 Cassidy 1m08.465s; 4 Evans 1m08.568s; 5 Vergne 1m08.520s; 6 Wehrlein 1m08.598s; 7 Buemi 1m11.937s; 8 Ticktum 1m09.171s; 9 Nato 1m09.263s; 10 Rast 1m08.962s*; 11 da Costa 1m09.441s; 12 Vandoorne 1m09.500s; 13 Hughes 1m09.493s; 14 Dennis 1m09.265s*; 15 Lotterer 1m09.975s; 16 Sette Camara 1m10.083s; 17 Mortara 1m15.775s; NS Bird 1m09.217s; NS van der Linde*; NS di Grassi*; NS Muller*; NS Rowland*. * grid penalty. ** no time set, car withdrawn due to rear suspension issues.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Wehrlein 80; 2 Dennis 62; 3 Vergne 50; 4 da Costa 46; 5 Cassidy 43; 6 Buemi 41; 7 Rast 38; 8 Bird 28; 9 Hughes 28; 10 di Grassi 18.

NEXT REPORT

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Van der Linde top at home as BMWs clean up

INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
KYALAMI 9 HOURS (ZAF)
25 FEBRUARY
ROUND 2/5

While his brother Kelvin had a disastrous experience in the Cape Town Formula E round, across country it was Sheldon van der Linde who was able to celebrate a home win in the Kyalami 9 Hours. Van der Linde combined with Dries Vanthoor and Charles Weerts to give Belgian sportscar powerhouse WRT its first victory since switching to BMW for the 2023 season.

GruppeM Mercedes trio Raffaele Marciello, Maro Engel and Mikael Grenier qualified on pole position, but such was the ease with which they did so that the AMG GT3 was hit with a 10kg minimum weight increase before the race under Balance of Performance regulations. Van der Linde took the lead from Engel at Jukskei Sweep with a quarter of an hour gone, and the sister WRT BMW M4 GT3 in the hands of Augusto Farfus got up to second before the end of the opening stint.

While the BMWs ran around at the front of the 10-car field, the Mercedes developed its own 'BoP' measures with radio problems and then a gearbox issue that allowed the



Winning BMW led a WRT 1-2 for most of the nine hours

use of only third, fourth and fifth gears. GruppeM got to the 70% distance required for IGTC points before retiring the car.

A late safety car set up a 20-minute sprint to the finish. Van der Linde was in front of Maxime Martin, now at the wheel of the BMW he shared with Farfus and Philipp Eng. Behind them were the two Attempto Audis, but third-placed Patric Niederhauser, who shared with Mattia Drudi and Ricardo Feller, was on old tyres and didn't have the pace to challenge the BMWs. Van der Linde went on to win by 1.8 seconds from Martin, with Niederhauser third.

Behind the Audi of Markus Winkelhock, Dennis Marschall and Alex Aka, Jules Gounon anchored the SunEnergy1 by SPS Mercedes to Pro-Am honours in fifth with Yannick Mettler and Kenny Habul.

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INTERCONTINENTAL GT CHALLENGE
KYALAMI 9 HOURS (ZAF)
 Sheldon van der Linde/Dries Vanthoor/
 Charles Weerts
 Team WRT
 (BMW M4 GT3)

NASCAR CUP
FONTANA (USA)
 Kyle Busch
 Richard Childress Racing
 (Chevrolet Camaro)

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Busch shepherds field for record-breaking win

NASCAR CUP
FONTANA (USA)
26 FEBRUARY
ROUND 2/36

It's a new team for him, but it was a familiar and NASCAR record-setting result for Kyle Busch.

Busch, who moved from his long-time home at Joe Gibbs Racing to Richard Childress Racing in the off-season, grabbed control of the race on lap 143 of

200 and built his lead through a final round of green-flag pitstops. He beat Hendrick Motorsports' Chase Elliott by 2.998 seconds.

The victory was significant in several respects. Busch will be the final winner on the 2.0-mile track layout – the facility is scheduled to be transformed into a short track and will not be on the 2024 Cup schedule. The 61st victory of Busch's career also gives him at least one win in 19 consecutive Cup seasons, passing seven-time champion Richard Petty for the record.

Busch and his older brother Kurt have now combined for 95 Cup wins, making them the sibling combo with the most victories in NASCAR history, surpassing Bobby and Donnie Allison.

Busch overcame a pit speeding penalty to battle into the lead. Behind Elliott was Ross Chastain (Trackhouse Racing), who won the first two stages and led most laps. Chastain's team-mate Daniel Suarez completed a Chevrolet 1-2-3-4.

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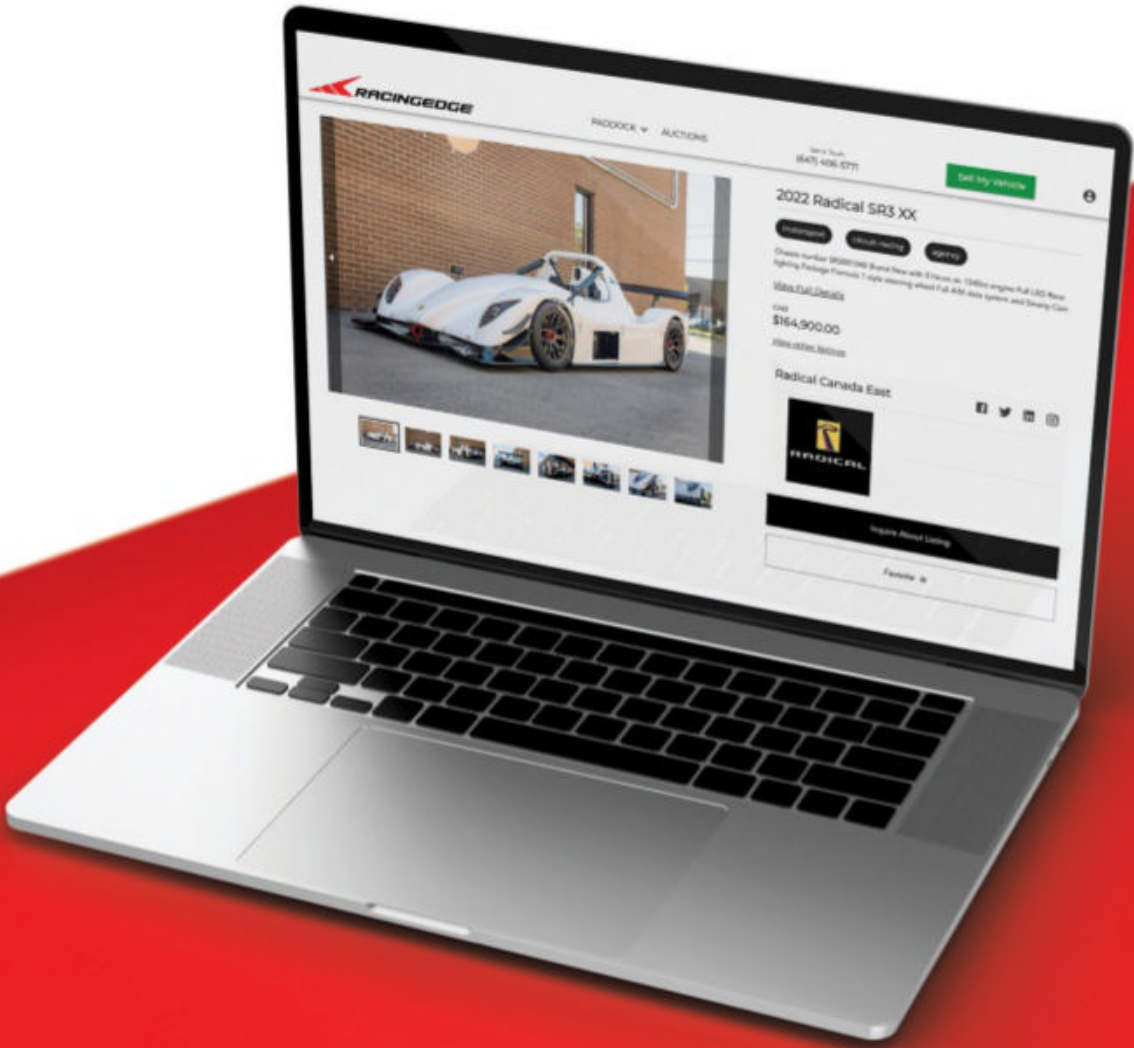


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This role requires extensive experience in PCB assembly, modification, testing and rework and an understanding of sensor technology and Electronics systems used in F1. The use of power supplies and multi-meters is a requirement as well as a good level of computer literacy so an individual with a high attention to detail is a must.

The Person

The successful candidate will have demonstrated initiative, a high level of skill in manufacture of precision electronic equipment, and the ability to work to the most exacting standards in a team environment. This position requires excellent communication skills with a flexible and can do attitude. Previous experience of motorsport is desirable but not essential.

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- Organise, research and review drawings, blueprints etc.
- Group and arrange all documentation by project or car design.
- Partner and liaise with external providers as necessary.
- Build a database that organises the drawings and documents.

Requirements

- Self-motivated to drive & own the project.
- Ability to work independently.
- Strong attention to and enjoys the detail.
- Methodical and measured in approach.
- Research skills to find out about the background of materials
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- Proficient PC skills

Qualifications & Experience

- Degree Level or commensurate work experience

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The Role

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Your team

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Your responsibilities

- To shoot and edit dynamic photography and video content.
- Hands-on creation of content for social channels.
- Plan McLaren's social media video content at least a week in advance
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- Day to day running and identifying potential problems in manufacturing of components to maximise performance and efficiencies.
- Identify areas for improvements in the manufacturing facilities whilst working safely to the latest health and safety requirements.

Candidate profile:

- The successful candidate will need proven competence in Composites materials and manufacturing processes. The ability to work under pressure to meet the demands of the business throughput.
- The candidate will need to communicate effectively with production and managerial staff.
- Job Type: Full-time
- Salary: £35,000.00-£40,000.00 per year
- Experience: Laminating & Fitting: 3 years (required)
- Schedule: Monday to Friday

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- Assist in the operation of the garage.
- Responsible for the cleanliness and condition of your work area, tools and equipment.
- Be an integral member of the team, take part in the pit stops & assist other team members.
- Report any reliability issues to the team.

The ideal candidate:

- Porsche experience is preferred, otherwise equivalent.
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Responsibilities

- Oversee the content team, managing the day to day production of content and resourcing where necessary.
- Working closely with the Directors and Senior team.
- Build and organise an effective content schedule.
- Work as the quality control figure
- Create analytical reports in which can be shared both internally for review and externally for commercial opportunities

Skills Required

- Someone with strong leadership qualities.
- 5+ years experience in digital content production, specifically in a producer or other leadership role.
- No normal 9 to 5 attitude
- Strong communication and people management skills

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- Support the Race and Test teams in their operational goals.
- To continually strive to improve team performance and support the group in its objective's day to day.

Requirements

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- Aid in the assembly and then maintenance of the race and test garage infrastructures.
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- Plan and administer all team truck operations.
- Maintain all team consumable stocks
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2 April	Cadwell Park	The Alan Healy Memorial Cadwell Stage Rally
7/8 April	Donington Park	Masters Race Weekend
8/9 April	Brands Hatch	British Truck Racing Championship
8/9 April	Snetterton	TCR UK Touring Car Championship
7, 8 & 10 April	Oulton Park	British GT and GB3 Championships
15/16 April	Cadwell Park	BARC Mega Mix Weekend
22/23 April	Donington Park	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
29/30 April	Donington Park	Donington Historic Festival
29/30 April/1 May	Oulton Park	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
1 May	Cadwell Park	Modified Live
6/7 May	Cadwell Park	Historic Wolds Trophy
6/7 May	Brands Hatch	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
13/14 May	Cadwell Park	Vintage Motorcycle Championships
13/14 May	Brands Hatch	GT World Challenge Europe
19/20/21 May	Donington Park	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
20/21 May	Snetterton	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
27/28 May	Brands Hatch	Masters Historic Festival
27/28 May	Donington Park	British GT and GB4 Championships
3 June	Oulton Park	BMW Sommerfest
3/4 June	Cadwell Park	Classic Racing Motorcycle Championships
3/4 June	Snetterton	GT Cup Championship
4 June	Brands Hatch	Brands Britannia
11 June	Brands Hatch	Tunerfest South
18 June	Cadwell Park	Vintage Motorsport Festival
17/18 June	Brands Hatch	American SpeedFest 10
17/18 June	Oulton Park	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
17/18 June	Snetterton	British GT and GB3 Championships
30 June/1/2 July	Donington Park	Motul FIM Superbike World Championship
1 July	Oulton Park	Supercar Pageant - featuring GT Cup
1/2 July	Brands Hatch	Super Touring Power
7/8/9 July	Snetterton	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
8 July	Oulton Park	Autos de France
9 July	Donington Park	Vintage Motorsport Festival

15 July	14/15/16 July
15/16 July	22 July
21/22/23 July	29/30 July
28/29/30 July	5/6 August
6 August	12/13 August
13 August	13 August
19 August	20 August
26/27 August	26/27/28 August
3 September	9/10 September
10 September	15/16/17 September
16/17 September	17 September
23/24 September	24 September
24 September	24 September
29/30 Sep/1 Oct	7/8 October
13/14/15 October	21/22 October
22 October	4 November
4 November	4/5 November
19 November	3 December

Oulton Park	Ford Power Live
Brands Hatch	Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix
Cadwell Park	Suzuki Live
Oulton Park	Tunerfest North
Brands Hatch	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
Donington Park	Classic Motorcycle Festival
Oulton Park	Oulton Park Gold Cup
Cadwell Park	International Sidecar Revival
Brands Hatch	Mini Festival
Donington Park	Convoy in the Park - British Truck Racing
Brands Hatch	Festival Italia
Cadwell Park	Cult Classics
Oulton Park	U.S. AutoShow
Donington Park	Tunerfest Midlands
Donington Park	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
Cadwell Park	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
Brands Hatch	Festival of Porsche
Brands Hatch	British GT and GB3 Championships
Donington Park	TCR UK Touring Car Championship
Oulton Park	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
Snetterton	British Truck Racing Championship
Brands Hatch	Ford Power Live
Cadwell Park	Vintage Motorcycle Championships
Brands Hatch	Go Japan!
Donington Park	Vaux Valves
Donington Park	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
Brands Hatch	Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship
Brands Hatch	Bennetts British Superbike Championship
Donington Park	British GT and GB3 Championships
Snetterton	Modified Live
Oulton Park	Neil Howard Stage Rally and Fireworks
Brands Hatch	British Truck Racing and Fireworks
Cadwell Park	Cadwell Park Stage Rally and Fireworks
Donington Park	Donington Stage Rally

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R Racing duo Miller and
Day became youngest
British GT winners



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R Racing targets British GT4 title with teens Miller and Hopkins

BRITISH GT

R Racing will continue in British GT this year and is aiming for another tilt at the GT4 title with a revised line-up of Josh Miller and Seb Hopkins at the wheel of an Aston Martin Vantage GT4.

The successful Ginetta Junior squad made its GT debut in the championship with an Aston last season. Miller and Jamie Day won at Snetterton to become the youngest driver pairing to claim a British GT victory, with a combined age of 33, and added a further success at Spa.



Miller will continue
for a third season
with R Racing in 2023

That thrust the duo into title contention, before they finished third overall.

“We were quite happy with how last season went,” said R Racing team boss Jamie Ross. “I think the goal going into last season was to get some race wins and podiums, so it was a bit of a shock leaving Spa [to be in such a strong position], and obviously our expectations changed. Losing the championship was something that was a shame but was also quite a good stepping stone.”

In place of Day this year is Hopkins, who in 2022 raced a Team Parker Racing-run Porsche 718 Cayman RS Clubsport. He took a best result of second alongside Jamie Orton, and the pair finished eighth in the points.

Miller is confident that the Silver-Silver pairing and the team can take a step forward from last season.

“There’s no two ways about it; Seb and I are gunning for the title this year,” said Miller, who also competed with R Racing in Ginetta Junior. “Last year was great and I learned a lot but it was disappointing to miss out at the final round. We topped the standings at

various points during that race, but it just wasn’t to be when it mattered most.

“Now I want to finish the job, and in Seb I know I’ve found the ideal co-driver to do that. His 2022 championship position didn’t tell the whole story – his potential was clear to anyone paying close attention.”

Ross believes the line-up will be one of the favourites for the title. “We wouldn’t be doing it if we didn’t think we could win the championship,” he said. “We’re not just a team that wants to enter for the sake of it. From our point of view, we know what we need to do to improve on last year. It sounds silly really but it’s just about not making mistakes, but it was our first year of GT racing and you expect things like that to happen.”

● Paddock Motorsport will once again field a GT4 entry this season, with Kavi Jundu and Tom Rawlings at the wheel of a new-for-2023 McLaren Artura. Jundu steps up from the GT Cup, while Rawlings rejoins Paddock after racing with Century Motorsport last season alongside Chris Salkeld.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Livesey targets Club Enduro in special G20

CLUB ENDURO

Club Enduro contender Alec Livesey has developed a highly modified Ginetta G20 with which he aims to fight for Class A glory in the 750 Motor Club series this year.

Livesey has taken several Club Enduro class wins in recent seasons at the wheel of a Honda Civic but has now decided to create his own G20 – inspired by a successful Ginetta he built in 2006 – to tackle the series. The new car features a two-litre Zetec engine that produces 229bhp in place of the more standard 1400cc motor, while the G20 also features a special front splitter, TCR-spec rear wing and “a fair bit going on underneath it” to generate more downforce.

“Back in 2006, we won the last Roadsports championship with it [the original car] and went off to Britcar with it – this is a bit of a reincarnation of that car,” Livesey explained. “It’s got a Sadev sequential gearbox and it’s a bit of a step forward. The aero is all designed by myself in the garage and we’ve got a TCR rear wing.



It’s for Club Enduro and the idea is to go out and compete against the TCR cars in Class A – whether we can or not, I don’t know!”

Former Mazda MX-5 racer Livesey is due to share the car with fellow MX-5 competitor Adam Bessell this year. Other modifications he has made include tweaks to the rear of the chassis to aid with incorporating a larger fuel tank to better cope with the two-hour race durations.

Livesey completed a shakedown run in the G20 at Brands Hatch at the end of January and was set to test a tweaked version earlier

this week. “The initial shakedown went fairly well, but there was a bit too much aero on the front, so we’ve made some alterations,” he said. “It’s reducing drag and hopefully generating a bit of downforce but it’s getting it all to work together – it’s an educated guess without a wind tunnel! Now it’s about trying to get an aero balance.”

Livesey admits that the G20 monster is a bit of a “Marmite car” but is optimistic that its lightweight nature will help it fight at the front of the competitive Club Enduro pack.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Gibson and Mickel back for more Legends fun



LEGENDS

Last year’s Legends runner-up Will Gibson and five-time champion John Mickel are among an initial batch of 20 entries for the series this year.

Two Legends titles will be up for grabs this season, with the regular

contest joined by the three-event Legends Elite Cup, for when the category appears alongside British Touring Cars.

Gibson, who narrowly missed out on last year’s crown, and Mickel will enter both competitions. Other notable entries include Marcus Pett –

fourth behind Mickel in last year’s standings – and Rookie Cup victor Ben Higgins.

“With Will, John and Marcus – three of our top four from last season – all confirmed, we know the quality of action will be as spectacular as ever,” said series owner Phil Cooper.

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Bell spearheads Optimum's McLaren British GT attack

BRITISH GT

McLaren factory driver Rob Bell will return full-time to British GT with Optimum Motorsport this season.

The 43-year-old last completed a full campaign in British GT with Balfe Motorsport in 2019, when he and Shaun Balfe finished third in the standings aboard a McLaren 720S GT3.

He will drive a new evolution of the 720S alongside Mark Radcliffe, who made his series debut last year in a Valluga Motorsport-run Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 after stepping up from the Carrera Cup.

"British GT, from what I can see, this year is going to be phenomenal," said Bell. "It's sold out and the calibre of Pro and Am drivers is fantastic. It's going to be a challenge and tough for anyone doing it."

"To have that level of competition is what I enjoy, but my focus mainly will be getting Mark confident in the car and up to speed. I've been brought in to speed up Mark's learning."

Optimum won the GT3 title in 2018 with Jonny Adam and Flick Haigh, as well



McLaren factory driver
Bell will race for Optimum

as GT4 crowns in 2013 and 2016.

The squad will return to the GT4 division this season for the first time since 2019. Jack Brown joins the team from Century Motorsport and will partner Porsche Sprint Challenge GB runner-up Charles Clark in a new-for-2023 McLaren Artura GT4.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Radical ace wins scholarship prize

BRITISH ENDURANCE

Reigning Radical SR1 Cup champion Daryl De Leon Taylor has been named as the Team Hard Scholarship winner for 2023.

After a closely contested day of assessments at Brands Hatch last week, the Motorsport UK Academy student triumphed in a three-way shootout against kart champion Peter Knight

and new Academy recruit Olivier Algieri.

A prize drive in the British Endurance Championship with Team Hard, together with development driver duties, now awaits the Anglo-Filipino teenager.

"The level of competition I've been up against has just been incredible," said De Leon Taylor. "In the end, I knew I was only going to have one chance at this and so I took it."

"I had an amazing 2022, winning not only here but also taking the world title in Las Vegas. Now I've got a fantastic opportunity to do even more."

"I can't thank Tony [Gilham, team boss] and the instructors enough. They showed me how to get the most from the car and how to bring the tyres in. That's what gave me the confidence to really push in the final run."

STEVE HINDLE

IN THE HEADLINES

ARDEN GOES PING IN GB3

US Formula 4 frontrunner Noah Ping is the latest driver announced for the GB3 grid, which he will join with Arden. Ping finished third in the US F4 standings last year and began his racing career at the wheel of a Radical in 2020. "We've already completed a good amount of testing with Noah at Jerez and Barcelona, and the speed he demonstrated in the USA was on show," said Arden team manager Jack Woodhouse.

XENTEK'S FIRST DRIVERS

Successful Ginetta GT5 Challenge squad Xentek Motorsport has announced its first two drivers for this season's contest, which is a class within the new Ginetta GT championship. Ginetta Junior graduate Ella Lloyd, who took a top-five finish in a one-off GT5 outing at the end of last year, is now planning a full campaign and she will race alongside Sam Harvey, who is continuing for a second season.

REVOLUTION LEADERS STAY

Several Sports Prototype Cup race winners have confirmed that they will continue in the series this year, including former Radical driver Roger Green – victorious at the Portuguese Algarve circuit last year – and two-time conqueror Richard Morris. Also back at the wheel of a Revolution will be Olympic cycling legend Sir Chris Hoy.

FF CORSE'S NEW RECRUITS

FF Corse has announced that James Owen and Tom Fleming will drive for the team in Ferrari Challenge Europe this year for their first full racing campaigns. The pair contested a handful of events in 2022 in order to get licence signatures before tackling two rounds of the GT Winter Series (below) at Estoril and Valencia, each achieving several podiums. "Working with two young, quick and keen drivers is a real privilege," said FF Corse's Ed Barton-Hilton.





BLAST FROM THE PAST

Race Retro returned after a pandemic-enforced three-year hiatus last week with Louise Aitken-Walker back behind the wheel of an ex-Russell Brookes Vauxhall Astra on the Stoneleigh Park demonstration stage. The ladies world champion of 1990 headed a field of 120 cars made up of Group B, replicas and rally icons driven by the likes of Galway International winner Meirion Evans and two-time British champion David Llewellyn. Among the exhibits in the halls was a replica of 'Bloody Mary' (inset), the hillclimb special originally built by Autosport co-founder and long-time technical editor John Bolster in 1931. The replica, now owned by Jim McLean, was built in the US and is a largely faithful recreation of the original, which lives in the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu.

Hodgen to race Chevron in Classic F3

CLASSIC F3

Chris Hodgen plans to join his uncle Rob Moores on the Historic Sports Car Club's Classic Formula 3 grid this season after acquiring a sister 1977 Chevron-Toyota B38.

Hodgen, who has masterminded the Duckhams Yuasa Racing Porsche Carrera Cup GB team for the past two years, has acquired the ex-Derek Warwick chassis from Clive Wood.

"I have helped Robbie with his car [the ex-Derek Daly/Steve Malins machine] for years, but he's never offered me a go in it, so I thought it was about time that I had my own," said Hodgen. Whether he shares his set-up with me or not remains to be seen, but I suspect I'll start with a basic



one. While I can't do many races this year, we are both competitive and want to beat each other. Whatever happens, it's going to be fun with two guys from Bolton racing yellow Chevrons built in their home town."

Hodgen has not contested a full season since 2017, when he landed the Monoposto F3 crown in a Dallara-Toyota F304, and will race the Chevron

for the first time in the FIA Cup race at Paul Ricard next month.

Duckhams Yuasa Racing will enter Harry Foster, son of former British Touring Car racer Nick, alongside Porsche GB Junior Adam Smalley in the Carrera Cup this season. "That's my priority; the F3 is just for fun," added Hodgen.

MARCUS PYE



Fiesta crew took the lead after Ford made a mistake in his Citroen on stage six

JEP

Henderson and Lees repeat East Riding Stages victory in Fiesta

ASPHALT RALLY

Last year’s East Riding Stages Rally winners David Henderson and Chris Lees repeated their success on this year’s popular Yorkshire closed-roads event, taking victory by 3.6 seconds. The Citroen C3 R5 of James Ford and Neil Shanks led the latest Motorsport UK Asphalt Rally Championship round after the first five stages. But they lost time and the lead

after they spun and stalled on stage six of eight. Henderson/Lees moved to the top in their Ford Fiesta Rally2 and, despite a ditch excursion with a stage to go, they took the win. David Wright/Paula Swinscoe claimed second despite a spin on stage two in their Fiesta R5, while BTRDA Rally champions Elliott Payne/Tom Woodburn overcame their Fiesta Rally2’s brake problem

for the final podium spot. Ford managed to demote Rob Swann/Darren Garrod (Fiesta RS WRC) on the final stage for fourth, while Kevin/Owain Davies (VW Polo R5) completed the top six. It wasn’t a good day for reigning Asphalt Rally champion Steve Wood. His Fiesta WRC went off backwards into a ditch and he retired on the opening stage. **PETER SCHERER**

IN THE HEADLINES

ENTRIES ON THE RISE

There has been strong interest from competitors in the Clubmans Sports Prototype series for this year, with over 40 registrations received. The largest number is 17 for the top CSP1 class, with organisers saying the continued popularity of this division shows that it was the right decision four years ago to limit maximum power to 200bhp.

HELPING THE YOUNG

Event organiser the HERO-ERA has launched a new concept dubbed ‘Rally for the Ages’, which will allow crews whose combined age falls below 70 to be eligible for a full refund on their entry fee provided they start the one-day event, which will be held on 3 June at Bicester Heritage. HERO-ERA competition director Guy Woodcock said: “The Rally for the Ages adds another dimension to our youth-oriented policy. We need fresh young talent in the sport.”

MARTIN NOT SHORT OF PACE

Former Le Mans 24 Hours racer Martin Short made an unexpected appearance at the Vintage Sports-Car Club’s Pomeroy Trophy meeting last weekend. Driving his road-going Toyota Yaris GR, Short demonstrated the car’s pace by finishing with the second fastest time in the slalom, and it was one of only four cars to complete 15 laps of the grand prix circuit during the 40-minute track test.

CHAMBERS BACK ON TRACK

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers made a return to the Pomeroy Trophy meeting at Silverstone last weekend, this time swapping his 1964 MGB for more modern machinery in the form of a Porsche Carrera S (below). “This is a fantastic day out for anyone who loves motorsport and cars,” he said. “Whenever the next year’s VSCC events calendar lands on my desk, I try to make sure the date goes straight in my diary.”



STEVE JONES

John Turner 1937-2023

OBITUARY

John Turner, patron saint of the 500cc Formula 3 movement and stalwart competitor since the early 1960s, died unexpectedly at his home on Saturday, aged 85. With Paul Schroeder and Mike Murphy, Turner founded the 500 Owners’ Association in 1964, ensuring that the charismatic motorcycle-engined cars, on which the British production racing car industry was founded with Cooper at its epicentre, were not forgotten. The trio bought a 1951 Cooper-JAP MkV for hillclimbing, later adding another painted identically in black and orange. “They had the same helmets, so when one car broke, and they often did, it was a matter of switching numbers and hoping



nobody noticed,” said John’s son, Andrew. Turner scored his first class win at Loton Park in April 1966 and two years later bought a Cooper-JAP MkIX for £250, which began 53 years of fun with the yellow-and-blue machine. In 1971 he became 500OA champion and won its racing championship in 1983. He finished second in the 1999 and 2000 Goodwood Revival races, and was also club champion in 2000 and 2001. **MARCUS PYE**

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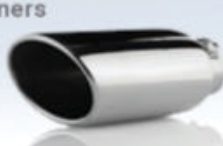
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CSCC ice-breaker greeted warmly

Holding a race meeting unconventionally early in February was a gamble, but it's one that paid off for organisers

MARCUS PYE

Back in the mid-1970s when, already as a life-long enthusiast I became an ardent pit and grid marshal, the British car racing season consistently opened with Formula 3 on the first weekend of March.

Venues varied with Brands Hatch, Oulton Park and Thruxton hosting events until they standardised at Silverstone in 1977.

I was as intrigued as anybody, therefore, when the Classic Sports Car Club announced that it had availed itself of the opportunity to hire Silverstone's Grand Prix circuit on the last Sunday in February. Tandemmed with the Vintage Sports-Car Club's Pomeroy Trophy staple – not a race meeting as such, but a gloriously quaint series of tests including a high-speed trial in which the most diverse range of cars all chase the hallowed prize – the first rendezvous of the CSCC's 20th anniversary calendar thus became the first inscribed on my own 2023 schedule.

Naysayers were quick to argue it wouldn't work, suggesting the club's principals were mad in subscribing to a Winter Warm-Up – what friends in New Zealand know as Ice-Breakers at the opposite end of split-year seasons – which could be coloured by an Arctic blast or truncated by fading light. It was always going to be cold, although there is far more shelter at the heavily developed 'Home of British Motor Racing' than when racing started on the barren demobbed RAF airfield 75 years ago.

“We have more competitors here than we budgeted for, and more marshals than entries”

Given Silverstone's capricious microclimate, which dished up snow for F1's International Trophy in April 1973, and regularly drowned the British Grand Prix and the Classic in July (now renamed Silverstone Festival for 2023), they may have had a point. Yet, paradoxically, low bright sunshine was more of a problem for Sunday's CSCC event than lack of ambient (peaking around 4C) or track temperatures to some drivers in the later afternoon.

“As a small club, we were never going to get the GP circuit later in the season, so we brokered the concept of February [to Silverstone] and, when we were offered it, grabbed the opportunity,” says CSCC co-founder Hugo Holder. Racers' appetite to sample the demanding 3.66-mile layout justified the cost, as almost 170 entries – many cars double-driven in pitstop races – demonstrated them and the all-important marshals voting with their feet against the backdrop

of another winter of widespread woe. Supporting a lean organisation built on providing value-for-money racing for members – customers, remember – with a wide spectrum of vehicles and disposable incomes should come as no surprise, but they were all eager to try something new.

“The CSCC has never been afraid to be different,” adds Holder. “Like everybody, we might occasionally get things wrong, and we learn from that, but this time I'd say the gamble has definitely paid off. Yes, we have been very lucky with the weather, but it's worked out well. We have more competitors here than we budgeted for, and more marshals than entries.” Fellow club director David Smitheram, who again competed in Saturday's Pom – in his celebrated Chevrolet Corvette 'Clive', star of the children's books he has written – before taking up his administrative role, was equally buoyant after a splendid grassroots sporting weekend.

Happily, however, the programme (which comprised four 40-minute mini-enduros and two sprint races spanning five grids) ran ahead of schedule. Despite a pace car deployed for the clear-up of several damaged Caterhams 10 seconds into the opening race, and a couple of Code 60 interludes that apparently more than a few did not understand, the last Slicks Series cars were off track around 1710 and the heritage paddocks behind race control at Woodcote largely clear by 1730. Racers were thus wending their way home on a stunningly clear evening in which the Aurora Borealis phenomenon (aka the Northern Lights) was unusually visible across our islands.

Next stop for the CSCC circus is Snetterton 300 on 25-26 March, where the long-running Special Saloons and Modsports series joins the fray amid the full rollout of the club's categories. Following last year's showstopper, these machines will also be back on the MotorSport Vision-curated Historic Sports Car Club Oulton Park Gold Cup bill from 28-30 July. CSCC visits to Thruxton in May and Brands Hatch Indy in early June then lead to a monster 20th Anniversary event over 24 hours at Anglesey on 1-2 July. Another example of the club's innovative approach, cars grouped by series will race four times apiece around the Welsh circuit, once each under cover of darkness. Mallory Park, Oulton Park International and Croft then complete the attractive domestic programme, which runs to mid-October.

For those with budgets and a lust for adventure, historic US venues Daytona and Sebring will also welcome members from 1-5 November and 29 November-3 December, respectively. Now, they will be different flavours again, having attended the former's 500 and 24 Hours and SCCA racing at the latter on my travels to Florida in pursuit of racing – and competed with HSR at Daytona in 2000 – over the past 46 years. 🏁

 **P97 SILVERSTONE CSCC REPORT**



Christopher Mann's Alfa Zagato was one of the more unusual cars in action...

STEVE JONES

Plenty of variety at the Pomeroy Trophy

SILVERSTONE
VSCC POMEROY TROPHY
25 FEBRUARY

"You have to think of it as conceptual art," the newly grimed veteran quipped, having finally sparked life into a previously unwilling block. "It needs to be admired, not explained!" He may have been talking about his engine, or it could have been the handicapping calculations for the day's Pomeroy Trophy event.

For those new to 'The Pom', it's a day of on-track tests devised by Laurence Pomeroy to remember the work of his late father, the celebrated engineer, also called Laurence. Pomeroy Sr had been instrumental in developing key concepts of car design and engineering, particularly in the incorporation of lightweight alloys into builds. Later, when considering comparisons of

generations of grand prix cars, he devised a formula that accounted for age, weight, power and type. Still relevant today, Pomeroy's Index might often be cited in arguments as to which was the 'greatest' – Moss's Cooper? Stewart's Tyrrell? Mansell's Williams? Or Hamilton's Mercedes? Suggesting how a car of 'then' would perform now.

At Silverstone, competitors took part in a series of tests: a timed slalom, straightline acceleration, braking, and then a 40-minute session on the Grand Prix circuit, with drivers tasked to complete a set number of laps according to their car's age and specification. It's a challenge to find the best overall touring car, bringing together machinery that might not ordinarily have competed against each other.

Strolling through the paddock, it's obvious to see why this event, for all its quirks, is such a draw. It's cheap to enter,

and free to the spectating public. There are cars here from every decade since 1913, more than 100 in total, most road legal but a few pure-bred racers too. For many, it's their first outing of 2023 and greetings are enthusiastically swapped by all as transponders are fixed and tyre pressures checked.

The long queue for scrutineering was just about as eccentric as a Vintage Sports-Car Club meeting can be. From the remarkable pre-First World War 12-litre Vauxhall of Tony Lees to the most beautiful 1954 Alfa Romeo Zagato Coupe; and from Martin Short's testosterone-bulging Yaris GR to... a Vauxhall Zafira. With Pomeroy's formula applied, and the handicappers' adjustments made, each of these – in theory – stood just as much chance as the other in claiming the silverware.

On track, there were, of course, stars. The centenarians (Lees's Vauxhall, James Baxter's Romano and Ian Balmforth's Hudson) all showed might and splendour. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards's BMW CSL lapped furiously, Dougal Cawley's Lexus LS400 was a testament to soft springing, and John Felstead's Subaru Impreza lived up to its reputation. But, for all the millions of pounds of assembled heritage, Short's Yaris GR proved to be a star. Quick, agile and passing the mandatory carrying two suitcases test, it might not be crowned here (Felstead was provisionally declared the winner), but it could be just as revered in the future as that magnificent Zagato is today.

STEVE HINDLE



...while Mark Gold's Zafira was a little more mundane

STEVE JONES

Volvo victory with a Dolby soundtrack

SILVERSTONE
CSCC
26 FEBRUARY

Former single-seater pro Craig Dolby adores Nigel Mustill's remarkable Volvo S60 silhouette racer. Exploiting winter improvements, Dolby unleashed its crisp-sounding seven-litre Chevrolet V8 to stunning effect in winning the Slicks Series race, which closed the Classic Sports Car Club's 20th season opener on a bitterly cold sunny February afternoon at Silverstone.

Mustill led boldly before Kevin Clarke screamed past in Matty Evans's newly acquired ex-Webb brothers Lamborghini Huracan. Mustill duly relayed Dolby, whose best lap of 2m01.606s (108.36mph) roared the monster back to the front.

Confusion over starting the team's clocks – there were two tyre-warming laps before the green flag – meant Clarke missed the pit window, but Evans kept the runner-up spot despite a 30-second penalty. Arran Moulton-Smith hustled father Mark Smith's BMW M3 E36 past the GT3 Porsches of Australian David Harrison and Kevin Bird/Charles Hyde-Andrews-Bird for third. Dylan Popovic's Ginetta-Chevrolet G50 rounded out the top six. Harry Petch atoned for spinning his Ford V6-engined version leaving the assembly area by snatching Class B victory from Warren Tattersall's SEAT Leon Cupra TCR and Simon Evans's Porsche.

On pole by 5.5s, Danny Cassar dominated the 46-car Tin Tops race in Nigel Ainge's Honda Integra. Cassar's only drama was outbraking himself into Club, where a tweak of the handbrake enabled him to miss Ray Kershberg's MG Metro, although he clonked the sausage kerb.

The early demise of Manoj Patel's Honda Civic opened up the chase, although a short-stop penalty dropped James Slater from second to fourth, behind Turbo Tin



Dolby and Mustill were victorious in Slicks Series

STEVE JONES

Tops winner Phiroze Bilimoria (VW Scirocco) and Russell Hird (Integra), after a scrap from which Adam Brown's Ford Fiesta ST faded. Carl Chambers's Peugeot 208 GTI hit trouble, handing Turbo Tin Tops Class D to John Wyatt (Mini Cooper S R56).

Taming savage supercharged and turbocharged cars respectively, Caterham masters Jonny Pittard and Luke Stevens squabbled over the morning's Magnificent Sevens gold, Pittard triumphing by 0.092s. A clash at Copse within seconds of the start caused a two-lap safety car hiatus. Richard Carter repassed Jonathan Edwards into Brooklands for third and Class G.

Without Stevens, who had sold the car in the interim, Pittard's task from the previous winner's 10-place grid drop was simplified. Leading by Abbey on lap one, Pittard bellowed to his double as Carter again denied the quicker-starting Edwards. Bruce Wilson improved to fourth, shadowed by former Ducati motorcycle racer Chris Mayhew, who netted a Class F clean sweep on his car debut in a BOSS Racing C400.

Alex Taylor survived the first-lap tag that eliminated Tony Blake's sister TVR Tuscan to win the Modern/Future Classics race by a country mile from Caterham graduate Matt Spark's Porsche 911 GT3. Despite running on five cylinders, Spark negated a 60s pit speeding penalty on the last lap to pip

Future winner Richard Harman (Porsche 944). In exalted company, Roger Hamilton (Ginetta G27) claimed a committed fourth.

A short Code 60 period presented David Harvey's Lotus 340R with a 34s New Millennium/Open Series lead after two laps. He almost doubled it next time round, and a 20s infringement imposition proved irrelevant. Chris Murphy's BMW E46 GTR V8 was too far behind, having grabbed second when duellist Dominic Malone's E90 ran out of fuel on the last lap.

MARCUS PYE



STEVE JONES

WEEKEND WINNERS

SLICKS SERIES

Nigel Mustill/Craig Dolby (Volvo-Chevrolet S60)

TIN TOPS/TURBO TIN TOPS/PUMA CUP

Danny Cassar (Honda Integra Type R)

MAGNIFICENT SEVENS

Races 1 & 2 Jonny Pittard
(Caterham CSR s/c, above)

MODERN CLASSICS/FUTURE CLASSICS

Alex Taylor (TVR Tuscan Challenge)

NEW MILLENNIUM/OPEN SERIES

David Harvey (Lotus 340R)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com



This moment for Cassar didn't deny him Tin Tops triumph

STEVE JONES



NATIONAL FOCUS

THE CHANGES GRIPPING UK MOTORSPORT

The Avon brand is set to disappear and other manufacturers are reassessing their ranges, which leaves the tyre industry going through a period of evolution

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Often the only time they hit the headlines are when scraps of rubber are sent flying in all directions after a failure. In other words, tyres are not always the most interesting of subjects aside from when something goes wrong. Yet tyres have increasingly become a hot topic in national motorsport in recent months, for very different reasons.

The announcement in October that Avon Tyres owner Goodyear was beginning a consultation process about closing the Melksham manufacturing site – potentially resulting in a loss of jobs and the famous name disappearing – caused shockwaves in certain corners of the sport. Then it emerged that other tyre makers such as Yokohama were undergoing a restructure and reassessing their rubber ranges, which in turn created further uncertainty. And this all followed a period when some tyres had been in short supply.

But, before examining the impact of Goodyear's decision and the wider changes in the industry, it is important to consider the challenges manufacturers have faced over the past few years. And, inevitably, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major role. "With COVID, not many people went out and about so not many people were buying tyres," says Toyo Tires UK technical director and European motorsport manager Alan Meaker. "Shipping costs were very high for containers from abroad and there was a shortage of containers and shipping delays because of COVID. If you were bringing stuff in from Japan and China, it affected a business with delays and costs – container prices peaked at around \$18,000 (£15,000) but have now dropped back to near pre-COVID levels."

Meaker says that Toyo was "just about" able to fulfil all of its orders during this challenging time, when obtaining the required stock from the Asian manufacturing sites was so tricky, but there were shortages elsewhere. And, amid all these difficulties, manufacturers were taking a moment for some inward reflection.

"With COVID and the Ukraine war, it's made everyone have a real good look at what their core business is," continues Meaker. "Every tyre manufacturer has got to make money and the process and time is about the same to produce a large tyre as a small-inch tyre and

"WITH COVID AND THE UKRAINE WAR, IT'S MADE EVERYONE LOOK AT WHAT THEIR CORE BUSINESS IS"

there's obviously more money with a larger-inch tyre. From a motorsport perspective, there are a lot of cars out there using tyres that are going to be stopped – the 13/14-inch tyre availability is getting less and less."

One brand seemingly following this trend of scaling back its smaller-diameter product range is Yokohama. It has been "constantly reviewing our motorsport activities" and long-standing head of UK motorsport Mark Evans is no longer working for the company, with the change in approach resulting in some organisers looking elsewhere. "We had a number of championships with the >>



The 750MC's Clio championship is among the series changing tyre supplier this year



STEVE JONES

JEP

Yokohama A048R as the control tyre, which was a very good tyre that's been in production for a long time – it's very much a mainstay of a lot of our championships," explains 750 Motor Club competitions secretary Giles Groombridge. "It led to us needing to look around to see what else was suitable and available in the market, and where there was a long-term commitment to manufacturing smaller size tyres. Classic Stock Hatch, Clio Sport, Cup 200 and Ma7da are all moving to Toyo Tires' R888R – they seem to be keen to continue manufacturing that tyre."

And those 750MC categories are far from alone in joining Toyo's ranks for this season. The Scottish Motor Racing Club and MG Car Club are among other organisers to have entered new agreements with the brand. "The core market [of the R888R] is club racing, which has helped us gain other championships," says Meaker. "I've club raced for years, so I try to understand it from a club racing point of view. We've got a product that is durable and reasonably priced."

Meaker says the majority of these new agreements are three-year contracts in a bid to offer stability. "It's stable then for the clubs and stable for us as well, so we know what the estimated sales will be and so we can get stock in," he adds. "It's got to work for all parties – the tyre manufacturer, the championship and the competitors."

While the 750MC has been able to fairly easily replace some of its Yokohama deals – Toyo is far from the only one to expand, with other Asian manufacturers such as Nankang and MRF also increasing their UK presence in recent years – Groombridge says the potential Avon closure could pose a greater problem. "The Avon situation is far more concerning because those tyres are far more niche," he says. "For a lot of the Yokohama tyres being used there are alternatives, but there's not always alternatives to Avons."

Meaker adds: "It's caused a lot of turmoil – I get a lot of phone calls saying, 'What can you fit on this, what can you fit on that?'"

Unsurprisingly, there is still a lot of uncertainty over what may happen over the coming months regarding Avon. What Goodyear – which bought the Cooper Tires group that owned Avon in June 2021 – has made clear is that all existing Avon contracts will be honoured, and that does not just apply to this year. Officially, the consultation into the closure is still ongoing and there are currently no indications of an imminent halt to production. In fact, the



STEVE JONES

original terms of the process state that the closure would occur by the end of 2023 so there is, in theory, still plenty of time for manufacturing before then.

Yet even if the Avon brand does disappear, it does not necessarily mean the end for all of its product ranges. Just last week came confirmation from parent company Goodyear that it will be reintroducing its historic 1970s and 1980s Formula 1 tyres, along with F2 rubber and developing an all-weather Appendix K tyre for 1960s/70s sportscars – all areas currently catered for by Avon.

Nevertheless, the Historic Sports Car Club has sensibly taken some precautions. It has rewritten the regulations for some of its categories to allow alternative tyres to be used in the event of further sudden upheaval or supply problems. "In this vacuum, other manufacturers are looking at the UK market, but we really don't know the full extent of what's going to happen in the future," says club CEO Andy Dee-Crowne, who believes American company Hoosier is among those looking to increase their UK involvement. "We've relaxed some of our tyre rules in the event we can't get hold of tyres, and we will allow other types of tyre, subject to approval.

We can therefore move quickly to a new supplier should circumstances mean no tyres are available."

But Avon's current business extends far beyond the world of historics, with its crossply tyres a mainstay of Formula Ford 1600 competition, and work is also under way here to ensure a suitable solution for the future is found. The British Racing & Sports Car Club



STEVE JONES



Goodyear is reviving its Historic F1 tyres to replace the current Avons

“IT’S NOT A SIMPLE DECISION MADE OVER A COUPLE OF PINTS OF BEER – IT’S GOT TO BE A FIVE-YEAR PLAN”

runs the National and Super Classic FF1600 categories, as well as the Formula Ford Festival, and its chairman Peter Daly says the club is “engaging with other companies” for 2024 and beyond. “There’s been no shortage of alternative suppliers,” he says. “As well as getting the same performance [that needs to be considered], its durability, cost and the manufacturing supply chain has to be right. What we’ve got to be careful of is we’ve got to try and avoid changing the performance of the tyre that gives it more grip and increases the speed of the cars and starts to wear the tyre quicker. If you can run two or three meetings on the same set of tyres, that’s ideal. You’re starting to risk the cars more with better grip, so you’ve got to look at the big picture.

“It’s not a simple decision made over a couple of pints of beer – it’s got to be part of a five-year plan. But we’ve found nothing to worry about. It’s not insurmountable and I’m confident, with the team at the BRSCC, we will deal with it. There’s never a shortage of new companies wanting to knock on doors.”

It’s a similar situation at Caterham, another long-term Avon customer. Discussions are continuing with alternative suppliers, although Caterham’s chief motorsport and technical officer Simon Lambert says that the potential demise of Avon is a “huge shame”. “We’ve had a great relationship with Avon over the years,” he says. “They’ve developed some fantastic tyres for us but there are other options out there. We’re still talking to a small number of tyre manufacturers – we’re fortunate in that we take a lot of tyres so have a nice purchasing power. But for much more niche

model cars, there’s not the choice. We will find a way but the world is moving on and the tyre world is changing – we’re potentially going to have to look at larger tyre sizes [for the longer-term future].”

And that last point is a significant one. Given the growing shift towards larger, more profitable tyres, the whole motorsport community may have to adjust accordingly. Lambert says that such a shift would mean additional work on the suspension to ensure that it can cope with the different demands, while the wheel itself would also likely need to be looked at to see if any weight could be saved to mitigate the heavier, larger tyre.

With this shift in tyre diameters in mind, Meaker says that compromises will be needed, and those wedded to the idea of competing on a specific tyre might have to accept a situation where they must change size or not race at all. But, for now, there is still a lot of optimism, both in terms of new deals being made off the back of significant enthusiasm for club motorsport from competitors and that solutions to the likely Avon demise can be found.

But it’s worth considering the longer-term future, too. While efforts are well under way to decrease the environmental impact from cars, with alternative power sources and more sustainable fuels, tyres could soon be firmly in the spotlight. Greater sustainability and durability may be demanded and that could also have an impact on what is available. It seems that tyres could well continue to be a significant topic for many years to come. ❧



Avon customer Caterham is looking at alternative suppliers for the future

FINISHING STRAIGHT



Still a must-watch despite drawbacks



NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY FORMULA 1: DRIVE TO SURVIVE

A word of caution for those wishing to view the latest Formula 1 offering from Netflix's *Drive to Survive* documentary series, which was released last week: season five starts with a quick recap of the 2021 season finale, which, for some, might prove a bruising experience given the controversial events from the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

But that shouldn't detract from another must-watch series, with the opening segment of the 2022 season providing a nice palate cleanser as buddies Mattia Binotto and Gunther Steiner enjoy a getaway in the Italian Dolomites in a Fiat 500. It sets the tone for the entire season, deftly balancing the tension and rivalries that make F1 so compelling with light-hearted moments showing a more human side.

The opening episodes focus on F1's new balance of power with Red Bull top of the tree, Mercedes' struggles and Ferrari's bid to finally deliver the tifosi another crown. It quickly becomes apparent that Netflix and production company Box to Box Films have stuck to their guns. After all, why change a winning formula that has helped elevate F1's

popularity to unseen heights? The fly-on-the-wall camera crew, which follows different drivers and teams every weekend, again delivers candid insight with narrative context provided by talking heads.

World champion Max Verstappen is involved after clearing the air with the show's producers over the creative licence it has taken in the past with its portrayal of drivers. His contributions are limited to basic soundbites, but the importance of having the current world champion on board shouldn't be underestimated. The Dutchman can rest assured that his words aren't twisted by Netflix. The show is even self-aware enough to embrace its status as an entertainment product and not a documentary, with Mercedes chief Toto Wolff likening it to *Top Gun*.

One of the series' previous main points of criticism, its tendency to mix onboard radio messages with unrelated action footage, continues in season five, although its transgressions feel less egregious this time and mainly help propel the

episodes forward.

Last year's major talking points are covered with broad but quite fair strokes. One complaint is that Zhou Guanyu's Silverstone crash is milked for all it's worth, replete with endless replays and dramatic pauses before revealing the outcome.

Few segments are particularly revealing for diehard F1 fans, but it's the extras that make *DTS* worth watching. Scenes of Red Bull boss Christian Horner openly revelling in Mercedes' downfall and Wolff going to war over porpoising make us want to break out the popcorn and snigger along with amused bystanders Andreas Seidl and Jost Capito.

The popcorn stash gets raided again when we get to follow Ferrari's many strategy meltdowns and Red Bull catches flak for its cost-cap breach, or when the battle for Oscar Piastri's services between Alpine and McLaren comes to a head. Future Bond villain Fernando Alonso stars in a supporting role with his sudden move to Aston Martin – "I'm still the bad guy," the Spaniard grins to the camera.

Streaming action: Netflix
wrings every drop from
Ferrari vs Red Bull



ETHERINGTON



DTS doesn't shy away from fan service either. AlphaTauri's bromance between Pierre Gasly and Yuki Tsunoda is scooped up rather generously, and series star Steiner again grabs a lot of screen time. This time, though, we also get to see a more weighty, human side behind the Haas boss's mischief and f-bombs. They're just like the rest of us apparently, these F1 team bosses. We even get to see Alpine's Otmar Szafnauer iron his own shirts!

It's rather puzzling for Daniel Ricciardo to get a much bigger send-off than Sebastian Vettel, though, with the four-time world champion barely featuring in his last appearance before his F1 retirement.

The 2021 season was a tough act to follow and some of this season's weaker episodes don't quite scale those same heights. The unique footage that *DTS* thrives on is just about juicy enough to make season five a must-watch again, even if some elements will inevitably be grating to F1 apologists. Casual and new fans, the main focus group after all, will be in for another ride.

FILIP CLEEREN

FINISHING STRAIGHT



[autosport.com/podcast](https://www.autosport.com/podcast)



What we learned from F1 2023 pre-season testing

The three-day F1 pre-season test in Bahrain came to an end last week and, although not definitive for the year ahead, reigning champions Max Verstappen and Red Bull looked ominously quick. Listen to the Autosport Podcast for the latest talking points on the 2023 season.

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Bahrain Grand Prix

Formula 1 World Championship
Round 1/23

Sakhir, Bahrain

5 March

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 1310, Sun 1015

TV Highlights

Sky Sports F1, Sun 1830, Channel 4, Sun 2100

FIA Formula 2

Round 1/14

Sakhir, Bahrain

4-5 March

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 1310, Sun 1015

FIA Formula 3

Round 1/10

Sakhir, Bahrain

4-5 March

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 0930, Sun 0845

IndyCar Series

Round 1/16

St Petersburg, USA

5 March

TV Sky Sports F1,

Sun 2200

Indy NXT

Round 1/12

St Petersburg, USA

5 March

NASCAR Cup Series

Round 3/36

Las Vegas, USA

5 March

TV Live Viaplay, Sun 2000

NASCAR Xfinity Series

Round 3/33

Las Vegas, USA

4 March





FROM THE ARCHIVE

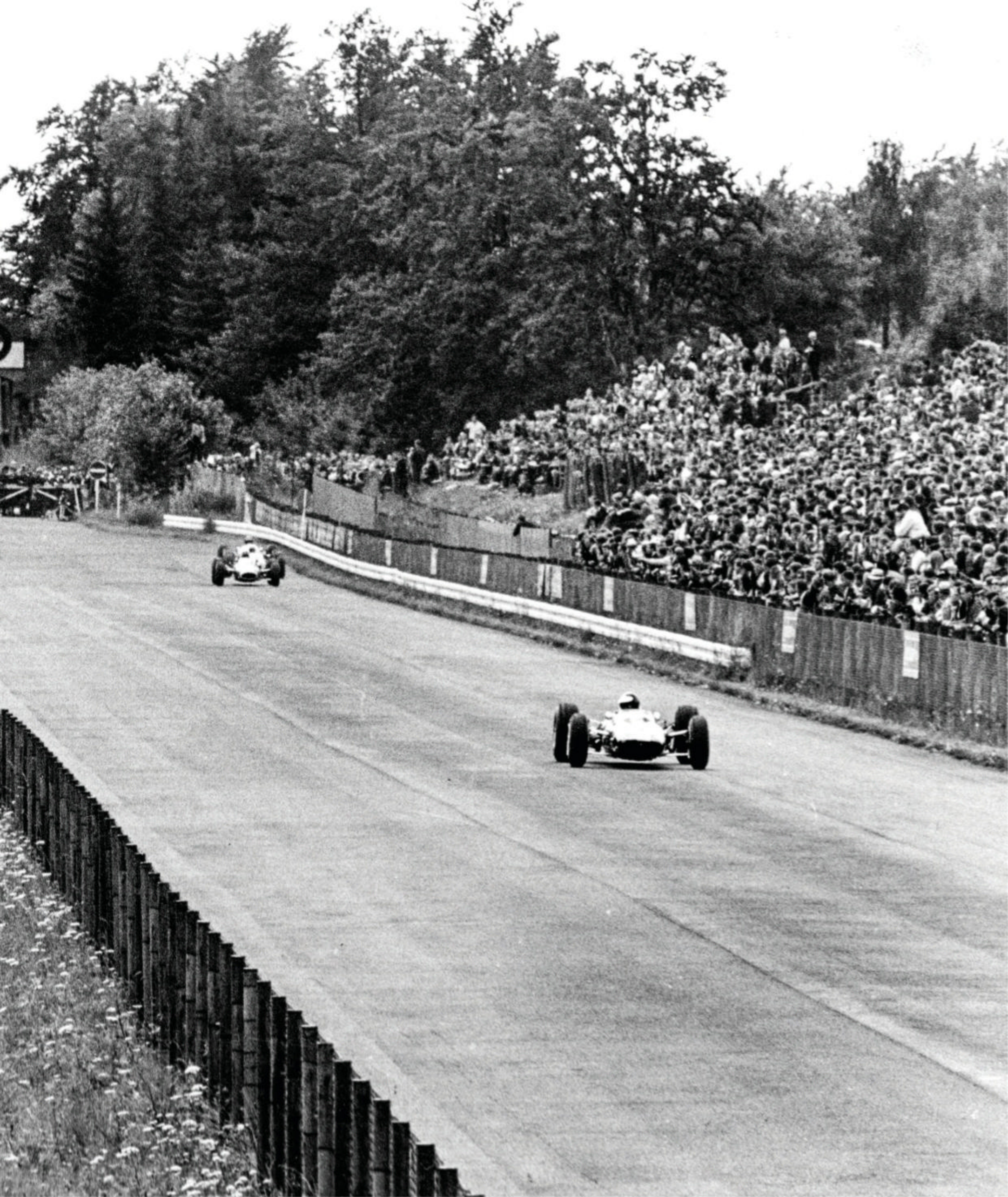
Jim Clark (right) casts a glance in the mirrors of his Lotus-Climax 33 during the 1965 German Grand Prix at the Nürburgring. Not that he was under any imminent threat – the polesitter

qualified more than three seconds ahead of his closest challenger, rookie Jackie Stewart in a BRM P261, then led throughout, setting fastest lap en route to his sixth (and fifth consecutive) victory of the campaign, securing his

second world championship crown with three rounds to go. Stewart dropped out with damaged suspension; Graham Hill (BRM) and Dan Gurney (Brabham-Climax BT11) finished a distant second and third.



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Fondmetal GR02

As the driver who has more Spa 24 Hours wins (five) than anybody, Eric van de Poele selecting one of the machines that carried him to glory on home soil would not have been a surprise. But BMW's all-conquering M3 tin-top, with which van de Poele also won the 1987 DTM crown, and the Maserati MC12 GT1 he took to three wins between 2005 and 2008 are usurped by an unlikely candidate.

Van de Poele only raced the Fondmetal GR02 three times in a 1992 Formula 1 season he'd spent largely toiling in the underdeveloped Brabham BT60B. But despite crippling financial shortages that meant Gabriele Rumi's team failed to see out the year, the Sergio Rinland design left its mark. Van de Poele calls the GR02, the 12th fastest car of 1992 on raw pace, "the best car I had on a track".

"I was always surprised about the traction of this car, it was *unbelievable*," he recalls of the Ford HB V8-powered machine, which never scored points. "I was just sad to have done only three races, I had not a lot of time in the car. If I could have been in it for the season I'm sure we could have been much better. The potential was incredible."

In the Brabham, van de Poele had to try every trick in the book to get close to qualifying and only made the cut once.



But the Fondmetal "was another world", and on his team debut in Hungary – without any testing – he was easily into the field in 18th.

"It was incredible, in my warming lap I was qualified!" van de Poele remembers. He spun out of the race, but went better at Spa, where he made the finish in 10th. His and the team's final F1 appearance at Monza was thwarted by clutch failure immediately after the start, but van de Poele's Fondmetal story doesn't end there.

He located the car in Rome and it was acquired by long-time friend Alain Jadot, who had it rebuilt "like new, it's beautiful", for van de Poele to give a demonstration at the 2021 Belgian GP. Today it's based just 15km from his home, which he regards as "a dream coming true".

JAMES NEWBOLD



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